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MEDITATIONS

ON THE

LIFE OF OUR LORD

For every Day in the Year

BY

THE REV. J. NOUET, S.J.

VOL. II.

COMMENCING WITH ASCENSION THURSDAY, AND TERMINATING WITH THE FEAST OF ST. ANDREW

Translated from the French

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PREFACE.

PERE NOUET presents the Son of Man to us, in the following Meditations, amid the labours, the contests, and the sufferings of his divine mission. Though always practical in his allusions to external conduct, the stages of that most wonderful and mysterious history on which he previously dwelt, being for the most part veiled in silence and solitude, or darkened by suffering, naturally suggested a train of reflection which leads to the love and cultivation of interior life. This is the vivifying soul of piety, on which depends the purity and perfection of exterior works, the principle which gives to virtue its solidity and duration. But in the present Meditations, the scene is necessarily more animated and varied; and being designed for our instruction in the duties and occurrences of active life, the subjects it embraces are better adapted to that end, and the reflections to which they lead more applicable to the government of conduct in our intercourse with the world. Here we listen to the words of life, as they flow from the lips of the Incarnate Wisdom, in the discharge of his public ministry, or derive from his example, lessons still more animating and impressive. Every act and word of our Divine Teacher teems with instruction. Even his miracles, which strike the infidel mind with the splendour of his divinity, serve for the

moral instruction of the Christian. Whilst the divine beauty of our Redeemer's character discloses itself with such captivating sweetness, under every diversity of circumstance, and amid every variety of persons, his example prepares us for every trial and suffering we are destined to encounter here below. Directed by such a light, we find that it is in this commerce of duty and charity, this routine of ordinary actions, that the highest and most enduring virtues are to be acquired; and contemplating all with the eye of faith, we learn to render each, however trivial or humble, meritorious of eternal life, by offering it in union with the acts and operations of the Man-God. Such a view of human conduct must teach us to estimate the dignity and importance of its most minute details, and readily to admit the consoling truth, that uniform fidelity in small things is a perfection of the most heroic kind. This habitual contemplation of the Son of God in all the stages of his mortal career, must not only serve to impress his image on the mind, but, as his example is a universal model, must stimulate every Christian to the practice of perfection, according to his state of life. Jesus Christ, in whom all perfection is embodied, is the image with which all the elect must be sealed; the model of holiness, to which all of every state and condition must conform. From the most exalted member of the priesthood to the untaught labourer, from the wise of this world to the dawning mind of childhood, from the contemplative to the man of business, all will find in Him, who is the way, the truth, and the life, all the lights and instruction necessary for the direction of their con-

duct. Whatever may be his profession or state of life, each may exercise that simple, but most efficacious rule, which was recommended by a great servant of God, PERE LE FEVRE, the companion of St. Ignatius, to a friend of his: "Jesus Christ is poor, and I desire to indulge in good cheer—Jesus Christ is naked on the cross, and I wish to be richly clad—Jesus Christ passed all his years in labour, and I wish to live in delicacies." Whatever may be the evils or defects of the soul, the same rule will be found equally practical and efficacious. The boundless charity, humility, obedience, and self-denial of Jesus Christ, cannot fail, by the contrast, to confound and crush our pride, selfishness, disobedience, and effeminacy.

But if all, without exception, are obliged to reflect in their conduct the likeness of that divine original, how strict the obligation on the part of those who have bound themselves, by the most solemn engagements, to a special conformity with it, and how awful the judgment that awaits a failure! Whether invested with the same glorious ministry, or destined to represent his providence in the same sphere of benevolence; whether commissioned to purify and cure the ulcerated conscience, or to heal the wounded frame; to raise the prostrate spirit from the abyss of crime, or to bind the broken heart; to distribute that heavenly bread which supports the life of the soul, or to sustain with corporal food his destitute followers, who faint with hunger in the desert of this life; whether called to gather the spiritual harvest, or to scatter the seed of the divine word; their own salvation, as well as their utility to others, must depend on their union with him, whose

example alone is capable of instructing them how to discharge worthily and efficiently, functions so sacred, and duties so exalted. His example alone can inculcate with effect the charity which is as universal in extent, as it is sweet and patient in its labours, and unwearied in its perseverance—whose sole ambition is to spend and to be spent for Christ in the service of its brethren; the humility which shudders at the applause and esteem of that world, which had for the Just One but the language of scorn and the crown of mockery, and which places all its delight in those abject duties and offices which partake of the ignominy of the cross; the obedience which recognises the providence of God in the direction of a superior, whose devoted heart, having centred all its wishes in the divine will, suffers no ungenerous exception to sully the purity and fervour of its first sacrifice.

As Meditation is one of the principal exercises by which those traits of the Son of God are communicated to the soul, it is superfluous to enlarge on the vast importance, the inestimable benefits of its daily practice. GERSON terms it "the sister of spiritual reading, the nurse of prayer, the director of good actions, and, in fine, the perfection and consummation of all heroic actions." St. AUGUSTIN pronounces it "the beginning and ground of all good;" and the Holy Ghost fully sanctions this exalted estimate of its advantages, by the eulogy he pronounces, through the Psalmist, on the man who is faithful to the practice of it: "Happy is the man who meditates day and night on the law of the Lord. He shall be like a tree that is planted on the river side, which brings forth its fruit in due season."

MEDITATIONS
FOR EVERY DAY IN THE YEAR.

ASCENSION THURSDAY

On the triumphant Ascension of our Lord.

1st Point. Consider—"While they looked on, he was raised up: and a cloud received him out of their sight." (*Acts*, i. 9.) Jesus Christ ascends into heaven, to take possession, in our name, of the crown which he inherited from eternity, and purchased for us by his sufferings and death. His humility shall be crowned with a diadem of immortal glory, and exalted to the throne of the God-head. He is the first born of the Father; the first-born amongst the dead; the first-born of those risen from the tomb. He shall, therefore, be the first who shall ascend into heaven. God is ascended with jubilee, and the Lord with the sound of the trumpet. Sing praises to our God, sing ye; sing praises to our king, sing ye, for God is the king of all the earth: sing ye wisely. God shall reign over the nations: God sitteth on his holy throne. This ark that has saved the world, after having floated on a deluge of blood, at length rests on the mountain. This invincible one

bears away the spoils of hell in triumph to the eternal hills. He that was a worm in his birth, an innocent lamb in his passion, a lion in his resurrection, ascends to-day like the eagle to the heavens. "Sing ye to God, sing a psalm to his name: make a way for him who ascendeth on the west: the Lord is his name. Who bringeth out them that were bound in strength; in like manner them that dwell in sepulchres." (*Ps.* lxvii.)

2nd Point. Consider—"The chariot of God is attended by ten thousands; thousands of them that rejoice; the Lord is among them in Sina, in the holy place." Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive. Jesus Christ has now accomplished his divine mission; he has replenished the earth with his graces; overthrown the powers of hell; delivered the captive souls from limbo; and burst the prison of the tomb. This day he rejoices heaven with the glory of his ascension, and fills those places which the pride of Lucifer left void. This day the sacred humanity of our Lord is elevated to the summit of eternal glory, whence he attracts to himself our understanding by faith, our will by hope, our affections by charity, all the powers of our soul by the desire of beatitude, of which he gives us this day an assurance. The earth was moved, and the heavens dropped at the presence of the God of Sina, at the presence of the God of Israel. Thou shalt set aside for thy inheritance a free rain, O God, and it was weakened, but thou hast made it perfect. Sing ye to God, who mounteth above the heaven of heavens, to the east. Behold, he will give to his voice the voice of power, give ye glory to God for Israel, his magnificence and his power is in the clouds.

3rd Point. Consider—Jesus Christ ascending from Mount Olivet; he ascends slowly, as if quitting us with regret; he raises his hands, imparting to the disciples his last benediction; he leads with him those blessed souls delivered from the captivity of limbo, and rich with the

spoils of the earth; he is borne in triumph by millions of angels, who render this service, not to the need, but only to the honour of their sovereign Lord and Creator. In him we behold the precursor of eternity, who prepares for us the way to heaven, and who, though exalted above all created intelligences, forgets not the meanest or lowliest of his creatures. Listen attentively to the parting expression of his love: "I go to prepare a place for you." (*John*, xiv 2.) Jesus ascends this day to prepare for you an eternal dwelling-place; wherefore let not your heart be attached to that which is transitory. Earth is the portion of the reprobate: your everlasting inheritance is heaven. To render yourself worthy of this favour, walk in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, follow the traces of his humility, patience, poverty, and contempt of the world. Thus shall you follow him into the kingdom of his glory.

Saviour of souls, this day heaven is filled with thy glory, whilst the earth is left a gloomy desert, a dreary solitude, our hearts a melancholy void! But thou hast promised, that when seated on the throne of thy majesty, thou wouldst send down thy Holy Spirit to replenish our hearts with thy grace. O admirable communication between heaven and earth! Come, Holy Spirit, take possession of our souls, enlighten, govern, and animate them with the love of Jesus.

FRIDAY.

On detaching our hearts from the earth to follow Jesus Christ into heaven.

1st Point. Consider—Jesus Christ has no sooner ascended to his heavenly throne than he draws us after him by the power of an omnipotent love. Herein is

displayed a marvellous wisdom, because the heart of man is, by the weight of its irregular inclinations, bent towards earth. How can it elevate itself to God by a generous desire, since its evil habits attach it to created objects? Jesus Christ operates, by his power, what human strength could not effect, sending his grace, by a miracle of mercy, to the aid of corrupt nature. Love is the impelling principle of the heart. Where this fire burns with ardour nothing can resist its power: it draws the heart, the will, the soul, with an irresistible attraction, to the object beloved. If, then, you love Jesus Christ (and happy is he who burns with so noble a flame), you will no longer love the vanities of the world nor the pleasures of the earth. You will find no repose here below; your desires will not be satisfied until you behold your adorable Saviour, your joy, your hope, and your happiness.

"My soul hath fainted after thy salvation, and in thy word I have very much hoped."

2nd Point. Consider—Jesus Christ has covered the earth with thorns, and planted his cross throughout the world, to remind us that here below we have nothing to hope, and that all our good is centred in heaven. For the same reason, when his visible presence is withdrawn, he still remains with us under the sacramental veil—not to make of this earth a place of heavenly delights, but rather to sustain us in our exile and sufferings. In heaven his state is that of glory and happiness, and such is the object of our hope. On earth his state is that of humiliation and death: such is the object of our imitation. In whatever state this divine model is considered, we learn detachment from the present life and the obligation of aspiring to the future. His cross inspires a hatred to the world; his glory animates us with the desire of heaven. He disengages us from earth by sufferings; he attracts us to heaven by hope. Here he is "the way"—a way narrow and thorny;

there he is the term of unalterable repose. The Holy Ghost, who is "a consuming fire," burns, even to the root, every terrestrial affection. Jesus Christ invites us to renounce all things and follow him; his love presses, afflictions compel, maladies warn us to think on eternity; death, which shall forcibly sever every tie, leaves us no moment of security. But "the Lord is nigh unto them of a contrite heart: and he will save the humble spirit. Many are the afflictions of the just, but out of them all the Lord will deliver them." (*Ps.* xxxiii. 19, 20.)

3rd Point. Consider—how great the blindness of man, whom neither the fear of hell nor the hope of heaven can withdraw from vice—who prefers being deprived of his true good, of grace, of God himself, rather than renounce wretched pleasure, which brings with it only confusion and remorse! Though placed between a crown of immortal glory on one side, and hell on the other, I amuse myself with trifles, I remain "all the day idle." Neither the joys of heaven nor the torments of hell are capable of touching my heart. I am insensible to the attractions of the one, or the menaces of the other.

O my soul! how long wilt thou be heavy of heart? Why love you vanity, and seek after lying? Know that God has made his holy one admirable; he has placed him on his right hand, where you may follow, if, like a useless member, you would not be separated from him for ever. Where your treasure is, there also should your heart be. Since Jesus Christ, who is your treasure, is ascended into heaven, your heart should follow, and dwell there inseparably united with him. It is the place of your birth, and your everlasting inheritance. Dwell there in affection, in thought; let it be the centre of all your desires, your joy, your hope, until your God and your Saviour call you forth from

your exile, conduct you into his heavenly kingdom, and crown you with that diadem of happiness prepared for you from all eternity.

SATURDAY.

On Jesus leaving the print of his sacred feet on the Mount of Olives.

1st Point. Consider—"And it came to pass, whilst he blessed them, he departed from them, and was carried up to heaven." (*Luke*, xxiv. 51.) Jesus Christ, departing from the earth, leaves the trace of his footsteps imprinted on the Mount of Olives, as if he would say: I go to open heaven for you, but if you desire to ascend after me, behold the way I have trodden; walk in my footsteps; follow the example I have given during the course of my entire life, and particularly here, where I leave an abridgment of all the duties of a perfect imitator of my virtues. What happiness comparable to that of a faithful disciple of the Son of God, who seeks with his whole heart, and generously imitates, this divine model. The soul that seeks Jesus wearies not in the pursuit of the object beloved; on the contrary, love animates her to overcome every obstacle that separates her from him who is her life and salvation. Jesus is the salvation of sinners, the light of the just, and the glory of the blessed; how important, therefore, not to stray from the path he has traced with his blood, since it is the way of life, of salvation, of light, and glory. The name of Christian, which you have received in baptism, imposes the obligation of imitating Jesus Christ, in the practice of those virtues, the example of which he leaves you on the Mount of Olives.

2nd Point. Consider—"And going out he went, according to his custom, to the Mount of Olives." (*Luke*,

xxii. 39.) Jesus commences his passion by prayer; he terminates it on the cross. By prayer and suffering he has opened heaven; by prayer and suffering you must follow him thither. The life of a Christian should be a continual prayer. "Blessed be God, who hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me." (*Ps.* lxv. 20.) As long as you persevere in prayer, be assured that God will not withdraw from you his mercy. The mercy of God and the prayer of man form a bond of the closest union; wherefore never relinquish prayer, nor break the bond it forms with mercy, and you shall arrive happily at the term of everlasting bliss. The life of a Christian is a continual cross. The cross is the royal road to the heavenly Jerusalem. All the saints have trodden the path of sufferings traced for them with the Saviour's blood. St. Bernard says: If the way is long, hasten with greater diligence; if it is rough and painful, have recourse to Jesus, saying: "Draw me; we will run after thee in the odour of thy ointments." (*Cant.* i. 3.) Happy he who so runs as to gain the prize, and bear away the crown of immortal glory.

3rd Point. Consider—Jesus on the Mount of Olives, exercising justice, in overthrowing the armed force by the power of his word; and mercy in permitting them to rise again, and healing him who had been wounded. Fear the justice of so powerful a God, and imitate the example of his mercy. Mercy is the gate of heaven, through which we are to enter *into the joy of our Lord.* Fear the judgment of God, and prevent his justice by a spirit of compunction and penance, that will at once be an atonement for past sin, and insure a salutary restraint, the best guard against the danger of relapse. "Ye men of Galilee, why stand you looking up to heaven? This Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come as you have seen him going into heaven." (*Acts*, i. 1.) You have beheld his glorious ascension; hereafter you shall see him descend in the splendour of

nis majesty, to judge the living and the dead, when his elect shall rejoice with an everlasting joy, and his enemies shrink terror-stricken from the wrath of his countenance. The remembrance of that tremendous day is the most powerful preservative against sin The angels seeing the Son of God ascend, inquire with admiration: "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garment from Bosra, this beautiful one in his robe, walking in the greatness of his strength? I that speak justice, and am a defender to save." (*Isaiah*, lxiii. 1.) Which do you choose? Will you encounter the rigour of his justice, or be sheltered under the protection of his mercy. If he is not your protector, he shall be your judge; if he is not your friend, he must be your enemy.

SUNDAY.

WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF THE ASCENSION.

On Jesus seated at the right hand of the Father.

1st Point. Consider—"And the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God." (*Mark*, xvi. 9.) Thus the evangelist expresses the glory which Jesus Christ possesses in heaven. In the incarnation, his glorified soul is united to a mortal and passible body; in the resurrection both soul and body are glorified; in the ascension their glory is perfected, being raised to the throne of the Divinity. His being *seated*, marks the end of his labours and combats, the consummation of his work, and the stability of his everlasting kingdom. Being seated "on the right hand of God," demonstrates the equality of his divine person with that of the Father, and the possession of his eternal inheritance, which is

given to him as man, in recompense of his sufferings and merits. From the everlasting glory which crowns the labours and sufferings of Jesus, we learn that perfect happiness and lasting repose are found only in the heavenly kingdom. What have you to hope for now on earth? "If you be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. Mind the things that are above, not the things that are on the earth; for you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." When Christ shall appear, who is your life, then you also shall appear with him in glory. "Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth. Put ye on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, the bowels of mercy, benignity, humility, modesty, and patience; but above all these things have charity, which is the bond of perfection." (*Colos.* iii.)

2nd POINT. Consider—"But when the Paraclete cometh, whom I will send you from my Father, the spirit of truth, who proceedeth from the Father, he shall give testimony of me." (*John*, xv. 26.) This testimony has confounded the proud sages of the world, who held as folly that one risen from the dead was the source of life, and that a man condemned to the ignominious death of the cross was the God of glory. It has triumphed over all the powers of earth, arrayed in opposition to the preaching of the Gospel, and whose baffled efforts have only ended in raising up a million of martyrs, to publish aloud the glory of their Redeemer. The testimony of the Holy Spirit has banished from the world the darkness of ignorance and sin, and caused every virtue to flourish. It is the river described in the Apocalypse, issuing from the throne of God, and of the Lamb, whose waters clear as crystal, refresh the Church of Christ, and render this tree of life fertile in all sorts of fruit. Listen attentively to the voice of the Holy Ghost, who, in the depth of your heart, renders testi-

mony of Jesus Christ; he will produce in you the admirable effects of his grace. He will humble the pride of your spirit, weaken the tyranny of passion, enlighten you with his lights, which impress on the soul the truths of eternity. "It is the spirit which testifieth that Christ is truth," (*John*, v. 6,) out of whom, says St. Augustine, all else is but falsehood.

3rd Point. Consider—"And you shall give testimony, because you are with me from the beginning." (*John*, xv. 27.) Who were those that first followed Jesus Christ, and published his glory, even to the extremities of the earth? They were poor fishermen, weak, simple—that is to say, without science or power "For see your vocation, brethren, that there are not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble. But the foolish things of the world hath God chosen, that he may confound the wise; and the weak things of the world hath God chosen, that he may confound the strong; and the base things of the world, and the things that are contemptible, hath God chosen, and things that are not, that he might bring to naught things that are. That no flesh should glory in his sight," (1 *Cor.* i. 29, &c.), lest the cross of Christ should be made void. "That as it is written, he that glorieth may glory in the Lord." "Admire the wisdom of God," says St. Ambrose; "he has called to the Apostleship, not the learned, the rich, the noble, but fishermen and publicans, lest the spreading of the Gospel be attributed to the power of man. Such is the spirit of Jesus Christ crucified; such is the virtue of the cross. Wherefore, be humble, mortified: contemn the honours and riches of the world, if you would render testimony to Jesus Christ.

I will give praise to thee, O Lord, with my whole heart; I will relate all thy wonders; I will be glad and rejoice in thee; I will sing to thy name, O thou most high. For thou hast maintained my judgment

and my cause. Thou hast rebuked the Gentiles, and the wicked hath perished. And the Lord is become a refuge for the poor. And let them trust in thee, who know thy name: for thou hast not forsaken them that seek thee.

MONDAY.

On Jesus as our Advocate in Heaven.

1st Point. Consider—"For Jesus is not entered into the holies made with hand, the patterns of the true, but into heaven itself, that he may appear now in the presence of God for us." (*Heb.* ix. 24.) "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all iniquity. My little children, those things I write to you, that you may not sin. But if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the just: and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the world." (*John*, xviii. 2.) He presents to his Eternal Father those wounds he received for our redemption, through which he supplicates the divine clemency in our behalf. The sacrifice daily offered in the church militant is not only a commemorative sign of what he suffered in his passion, but also the offering which he presents of those sufferings in the church triumphant. In the ancient law they offered lambs and calves: now we offer Jesus Christ, but we offer him in a state of mystic death, under the sacramental veil. In heaven he pleads for us before the eternal Father, without veil or figure. Have confidence in that infinite mercy, which can never be unmindful of your wants, but unite with that confidence a faithful co-operation with his grace. If human frailty surprise

you into any offence, arise without delay, and with a heart penetrated with sorrow, present yourself confidently to your judge, remembering him who is your advocate.

2nd Point. Consider—the Son of God, as our advocate, offers to the eternal Father our penances, good works and prayers, which become acceptable through union with his merits. How strict, therefore, the obligation of giving yourself to prayer, and labouring for your salvation! For if Jesus Christ has laboured, watched, and prayed for you, with what unremitting fervour should you not offer yourself as a sacrifice, through him, to the eternal Father? Reflect on the importance of uniting all your actions and prayers with those of the Son of God, and performing them with the utmost possible devotion and perfection, to the end they may deserve to ascend through him as an odour of sweetness. How tender the care of this merciful Saviour in watching over your salvation! Should you not be confounded at having so ill corresponded with his gracious designs in your regard? He desires from you the practice of humility, and you breathe only vanity. He requires that "in your patience you possess your soul," and you will endure neither pain nor contradiction. Beseech your divine Lord to take from you this ungenerous heart, too long rebellious to his grace. Say with the royal prophet: "Create a clean heart in me, O God; and renew a right spirit within my bowels. Cast me not away from thy face; and take not thy holy spirit from me."

3rd Point. Consider—"And I dispose to you, as my Father hath disposed to me, a kingdom: that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom: and may sit upon thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." (*Luke*, xxii. 29, 30.) Jesus disposes absolutely of all things in heaven and on earth; he disposes of our life and death, our fortune and honour, of all that

regards us; and these dispensations of his providence lead only to prepare for us a heavenly crown. This he has predestined for us from eternity; and prepared from the commencement of the world, assigning to us the place forfeited by the rebel angels. For this he was born, for this he lived, died, rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven. Wherefore, on entering into the world, ascending the mount of Calvary, or returning into the bosom of his heavenly Father, this divine Saviour could say: "I go to prepare a place for you." (*John*, xiv. 2.) But he admonishes you, saying: "Be you also ready; for at what hour you think not, the Son of Man will come." (*Luke*, xii. 40.) Amongst the virgins who were called to the nuptial feast, those only were admitted who were found prepared. You cannot possess beatitude in this life, but you can merit and prepare for it, as Jesus Christ has prepared it for you, that is to say, by sufferings. Can you too dearly purchase that for which the Son of God poured out the last drop of his most precious blood on the gibbet of the cross?

TUESDAY.

On the coming of Jesus Christ at the end of the world.

1st Point. Consider—"Ye men of Galilee, why stand you looking up to heaven? This Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, so shall he come as you have seen him going into heaven." (*Acts*, i. 11.) He shall return, not as a victim of humiliation and suffering, but clothed with the splendour of his eternal glory, as judge of the living and the dead. With what joy will the saints behold, on that day, their Lord and their Saviour! With what consolation will they be filled, on hearing that tender invitation: "Come, ye blessed

of my Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave me to eat: I was thirsty, and you gave me to drink: I was a stranger, and you took me in: naked, and you clothed me: sick, and you visited me: I was in prison, and you came to me." (*Matt.* xxv.) The world now flatters and smiles upon us; but its caresses shall be turned into bitter reproaches and maledictions. Our Lord, on the contrary, here chastises, but these chastisements will pass away, and his paternal caresses will endure for eternity. "To be with Jesus is paradise; to be without Jesus is hell."

Saints of God, who enjoy his divine presence, "blessed are the eyes that see what you now see." (*Luke*, x. 23.) May we become partakers in that glorious vision which is the consummation of your happiness. This is the object of all my desires, thoughts, and affections.

2nd Point. Consider—the honour the saints shall receive in the general assembly of angels and men. The Son of God will bear evidence to the services they have rendered him. The least of their actions shall not pass without honor and recompense. In proportion to their humiliation and mortification during life, shall they be exalted in glory. Those who were least upon earth, shall be greatest before God. This work of mercy, spiritual or corporal, performed in secret, shall be one day manifested with honour. This mortification, practised in private, this injury or confusion suffered for the love of Jesus Christ, this pain of body or mind borne in silence, unknown to all but God, shall then be published in the presence of the universe, and praised by the lips of the Son of God. If you are so happy as to endure persecution, and sustain the interests of Jesus Christ, at the expense of fortune, honour, and life, then shall your glory be incomparable. You shall behold your persecutors and calumniators covered with confusion. "Then shall the just stand with great constancy

against those that have afflicted them, and taken away their labours. These seeing it, shall be troubled with terrible fear, and shall be amazed at the suddenness of their unexpected salvation, saying within themselves, repenting and groaning for anguish of spirit: these are they, whom we had sometime in derision, and for a parable of reproach. We fools esteemed their life madness, and their end without honour. Behold how they are numbered among the children of God, and their lot is amongst the saints." (*Sap.* v.)

3rd Point. Consider—the bodies of the saints shall issue from the tomb, invested with glory, like unto the sacred humanity of Jesus Christ arisen from the dead. "They shall renew their strength; they shall take wing as the eagle; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint." (*Isaiah*, xl. 31.) But the sight of the son of justice, that is to say, the glorified body of Jesus Christ, which they behold with their corporal eyes, will complete their happiness and glory. This vision will redouble their joy, adding the felicity of the body to that of the soul, which consists in beholding the unveiled splendour of the divinity. This was the consolation of Job amidst all his sufferings—"I know," he says, "that my Redeemer liveth, and in the last day I shall rise out of the earth. And I shall be clothed again with my skin, and in my flesh I shall see my God, whom I myself shall see, and my eye shall behold, and not another: this my hope is laid up in my bosom." (*Job*, xix.)

O Lord! shall we henceforth refuse whatever thou demandest? Shall we not joyfully sacrifice for thy sake all we hold most dear, since thou restorest a hundred-fold whatsoever we renounce for thy service, and that at the day of thy glorious coming thou wilt "make all things new." (*Apoc.*) Courage, my soul, regret not the loss of thy honour, fortune, or pleasure, all shall be returned to thee with interest.

WEDNESDAY.

On the terror of the Reprobate at the coming of Jesus Christ.

1st Point. Consider—"Ye men of Galilee, why stand you looking up to heaven? This Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come as you have seen him going into heaven." (*Acts*, i. 11.) What will be the terror of the reprobate, when called forth from the infernal dungeons, to receive the sentence of final retribution? The re-union of their soul and deformed bodies will be one of their most excruciating torments. The fire of hell burning at the same time the soul and body of these wretches, shall redouble by sympathy the eternal misfortune of both. O how insupportable will this re-union be! What maledictions will the wretched soul pour forth, when constrained to return into the body, which shall be to it as a prison of fire. As they have been companions in sin during this life, so shall they be united in suffering during eternity.

O Saviour of the world! imprint in my mind a profound fear of thy judgments, and "pierce thou my flesh with thy fear." Thou hast said, that he who loveth his life shall lose it, and he who loseth it for thy sake. shall save it in eternity. Grant that this truth may be ever present to my thoughts, and so deeply engraven on my heart, as never to be effaced therefrom.

2nd Point. Consider—the fear, shame, and confusion that will overwhelm the wicked, when arraigned before the judgment seat of the Son of God. Anger, rage, and despair will rend their hearts with torment, more insupportable than hell itself. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (*Heb.* x. 31.) "And who shall be able to think of the day of his coming? and who shall stand to see him? for he is like a refining fire, and like the fuller's herb: and he

shall sit refining and cleansing the silver, and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and shall refine them as gold and as silver." (*Malach.* iii. 2, 3.) If the meek word of Jesus Christ prostrated the soldiers in the Garden of Olives, what shall be the terror of his enemies, when the voice of his indignation shall burst as a thunderbolt to annihilate them in the dust? Then shall "they say to the mountains and the rocks: fall upon us, and hide us from the wrath of the Lamb. For the great day of their wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand" (*Apoc.* vi. 16, 17) the reproaches of his abused goodness and clemency? For your sins I have been immolated; I have been despoiled of my glory, that you might be clothed with my grace and merits; I have given you my blood to drink, and nourished you with my flesh: how have you requited my benefits? With crime and ingratitude!

3rd Point. Consider—what envy, rage, and confusion shall seize the reprobate on hearing the sovereign judge say to his elect: "Come, ye blessed of my Father;" and then turning to those on his left hand, pronounce: "Begone, ye accursed." In language of despair they will exclaim: those whom I have despised, persecuted, wronged, and oppressed, are now numbered amongst the blessed, whilst I am condemned to eternal misery; they are replenished with celestial joy, I am involved in the flames of hell; they are exalted in the kingdom of God, I am plunged into the depths of infamy. What a subject of shame and despair, to be exposed in so deplorable and infamous a condition! Can I never blot from my remembrance that which I have lost; shall I always be sensible to what I now suffer? Must I be the scorn of my enemies, and can I not conceal from them my shame and my woe? Is there no darkness in the abyss where I may hide myself from their derision? Does not the remorse of my own conscience, and the image of my crimes, which incessantly torment me,

suffice? Must those whom I hate be the witnesses of my misery, and my disgrace be multiplied into as many torments as I have spectators, and these spectators rejoice and triumph at my torments? Think seriously on this: lose not heaven for a nothing, if you would not incur an eternal regret, which will serve but to render you doubly miserable, by the privation of an infinite good which you could have easily acquired, and the endurance of a sovereign evil which you cannot avoid.

O meek Lamb, enter not into judgment with thy miserable creature: thou art all goodness to those who serve thee, but a lion to those who refuse to obey. Ah! Lord, reign henceforth over all my affections; annihilate all that displeases thee in me, and grant that all the powers of my soul may be obedient to thy will.

OCTAVE OF THE ASCENSION.

On our Spiritual Ascension.

1st Point. Consider—"Ye men of Galilee, why stand you looking up to heaven?" As the resurrection of Jesus Christ has been followed by his ascension, so spiritual resurrection obliges us to seek the means of ascending after him. Amongst these, the first is to elevate ourselves above our passions, by subjecting them to reason; above our vices, by renouncing and treading them under foot. Let us, following the advice of St. Augustine, make of our vices a ladder, by which we may ascend after Jesus Christ into heaven. The second means is to elevate ourselves above terrestrial goods. For, says St. Gregory, we must raise the affections of the heart to that place where the sacred humanity of Jesus Christ is exalted. The third means is to elevate ourselves above the sufferings and miseries of this life.

It imports little by what means we attain it, provided we secure eternal felicity. The Son of God has entered heaven only by the way of the cross. The last means is to elevate ourselves above all our natural inclinations and the foldings of self-love, in order that we may be united with Jesus Christ. We must unite ourselves as members to their head, if we would ascend with him who has descended from heaven; for, as St. John says: no one can ascend into heaven, but he who has descended from heaven; the Son of Man who is in heaven.

2nd Point. Consider—"Blessed is the man whose help is from thee: in his heart he hath disposed to ascend by steps. They shall go from virtue to virtue: the God of gods shall be seen in Sion." (*Ps.* lxxxiii.) Having ascended in spirit with Jesus Christ, we should no longer regard the earth, but rather fix our thoughts on the heavenly Jerusalem. How useful is the remembrance of Heaven to strengthen us in the practice of virtue. My son, said the mother of St. Symphorian, encouraging him to martyrdom, remember eternal life; look up to Heaven; behold him who is the witness of your conflict. They deprive you not of life, they only change it into a better. "Keep thy heart free," says the author of the "Imitation," "and raised upwards to God; because thou hast not here a lasting city. Send thither thy daily prayers, with sighs and tears; that after death thy spirit may be worthy to pass happily to our Lord." Our hearts should be as disengaged from the earth as if we already enjoyed the society of the blessed. "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, O Lord: they shall praise thee for ever and ever. For God loveth mercy and truth; the Lord will give grace and glory. He will not deprive of good things them that walk in innocence." (*Ps.* lxxxiii.)

3rd Point. Consider—the example of the angels, who descend on earth, whilst the Lord enters with inconceivable glory his heavenly kingdom. All their joy

and beatitude consists in accomplishing the will of their Divine Master, who has appointed them to instruct his disciples. Imitate these heavenly spirits in accomplishing the will of God, whether in uniting yourself with him by contemplation, or in exercising towards your brethren the works of spiritual or corporal mercy. Seek God alone, in all places, at all times, on all occasions. "Bless the Lord, all his works; in every place of his dominion, O my soul, bless thou the Lord." (*Ps.* cii. 22.) Imitate also the example of the apostles; their hearts followed their Divine Master, and they desired to spend the remainder of their days in contemplating the place where they had seen him ascend; but because he had otherwise ordained, having adored the steps of his feet, "then they returned to Jerusalem, from the Mount that is called Olivet, which is nigh to Jerusalem." My son, says the author of the "Imitation," I know thy desires, I have heard thy frequent sighs. Thou wouldst enjoy the glory of the children of God. Thou wouldst be pleased to be now at thy eternal home, and in thy heavenly country abounding with joy: but that hour is not yet come; for this is yet another time, a time of war, of labour and trouble. Take courage, therefore, and be valiant, as well in doing as in suffering things repugnant to nature. This is what thou oughtest to wish, that whether in life or death, God may be always glorified in thee.

FRIDAY.

On the Apostles preparing to receive the Holy Ghost.

1st Point. Consider—"And I send the promise of my Father upon you: but stay you in this city, till you be endued with power from on high." (*Luke*, xxiv. 49.) Reflect on the reasons which oblige you to imitate the

apostles in preparing for the reception of the Holy Ghost. How great the indolence of those who neglect to dispose their heart for celebrating this glorious festival, or who invite such a guest into a dwelling-place unprepared for his reception. Have they not cause to fear, when with the universal Church they say, "Come, Holy Ghost, fill the hearts of thy faithful," that he will mock a petition that comes not from the heart? The Divine Spirit brings with him his seven-fold gifts, more precious than all the treasures of the earth. Yet, you are cold and negligent in disposing your soul for the reception of these priceless graces. As you cannot render yourself worthy of these sacred gifts, without his aid by whom they are imparted, say with St. Augustine: Lord, the mansion of my heart is too narrow to receive thee, enlarge it thyself that thou mayest enter; there are within it many things offensive to thy eyes: who can cleanse it, or to whom can I address myself, but to thee, O Lord, beseeching thee to purify me from my hidden sins?

2nd Point. Consider—the disengagement, solitude, and desolation of the apostles in the absence of their Divine Master, served as a negative disposition for attracting the Holy Spirit. Do you desire that the Paraclete fill your heart with his consoling presence and gifts?—empty it of creatures, and of all that is displeasing in his sight. Banish sin from your soul, by perfect contrition and a sincere confession. Have pity on your own soul, if you will render it pleasing to God. Fly sin; withdraw your heart from all inordinate attachments, that it may be conformable to the sanctity of God. "Give not up thy soul to sadness, for there is no profit in it." (*Eccles.* xxx.) Empty thy heart, and I will fill it. Cast out that which is evil, that it may be replenished with good. The spirit of compunction, according to St. Bernard, draws down the Divine Spirit into the soul. Banish from your understanding

all dissimulation and vain esteem of creatures. The Holy Ghost is the spirit of truth, which is incompatible with the false lights of the world. It is he renders testimony that Jesus Christ is the truth, and that all else is but vanity. In fine, banish from your will all inordinate desires: for how can a man attached to sensual appetites, and subject to passions, hope for that torrent of heavenly delights, which even the apostles could not receive whilst they were attached to the visible presence of the sacred humanity of Jesus Christ.

3rd Point. Consider—what were the virtues practised by the apostles, when preparing to receive the Holy Ghost. "They were all together in one place," (*Acts*, i.) and united in one spirit; as St. Luke says, "they had but one heart and one soul." They lived under one head. They prayed without ceasing. Imitate these eminent virtues, which will dispose you for receiving a copious infusion of the spirit of Jesus and his gifts. Cherish fraternal charity, and exercise profound obedience towards those appointed to govern you. According to the admonition of the apostle: "Purifying your souls in the obedience of charity, with a brotherly love from a sincere heart, love one another earnestly." (1 *Peter*, i. 22.) Acquit yourself with fidelity of all your duties. As every man hath received grace, ministering the same one to another; as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any one speak, let him speak as the words of God. If any man minister, let him do it as of the power which God hath ministered: that in all things God may be honoured through Jesus Christ, to whom is glory and empire for ever and ever. In fine, give yourself to prayer, employ more than ordinary time in this holy exercise, taking especial care that your heart be united to God by an entire dependence on his paternal bounty. The Spirit of God breatheth where he will, and as he will; but he never communicates himself more willingly than to those who ardently

desire, and fervently prepare, for his reception. If you sigh after the unction of the Holy Ghost, listen to his invitation: "Open thy mouth, and I will fill it."

EVE OF PENTECOST.

The Mission of the Holy Ghost.

1st Point. Consider—the gift of the Holy Ghost is the fruit of the merits of Jesus Christ. The Holy Ghost is a precious gift imparted only to friends. Our reconciliation with God is accomplished by the death of Jesus Christ. It has pleased God that all plenitude should reside in him, that by him and in him all things should be reconciled, and that by the blood he shed on the cross, peace in heaven and on earth should be restored. Therefore St. John Chrysostom says, it was necessary that Jesus Christ should offer a sacrifice, and reconcile us with God, before we could receive this rich present. We must first have been made the friends of God, which is accomplished by the cross.

What an honour to be made the friends of God! What a favour to receive the Holy Ghost as a pledge of this friendship! O sacred wounds of my Saviour, source of my happiness, to you I have recourse as a medium of thanksgiving for such a grace; obtain for me that purity necessary for receiving the inestimable gift you have merited for me.

2nd Point. Consider—the gift of the Holy Ghost is a fruit of the prayer of Jesus Christ: "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Paraclete, that he may abide with you for ever." (*John*, xiv.) Jesus Christ prayed during his mortal life, that we might receive the Holy Ghost; and having ascended into heaven, continues this supplication for all those who believe in him; according to the words of the Gospel:

"If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink." "He that believeth in me," as the Scripture saith, "out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water;" and again: "The water that I will give him, shall become in him a fountain of water, springing up into life everlasting." He speaks of the Holy Ghost in the hearts of the faithful, as a source of living water, whence issue several streams, as St. Gregory says: these are faith, hope, and charity, and the seven gifts of the Divine Spirit, which flow incessantly, and are never separated from their principal, to teach us that a soul forgetful of God, is as one dead, and will soon become filled with the corruption of vice. In fine, although Jesus Christ has demanded this incomparable gift for us, he nevertheless requires that we demand it for ourselves, in order to testify our esteem and necessity for this grace. O didst thou know the gift of God, and who it is that says, "if any one thirst, let him come to me," thou wouldst ask of him living water to extinguish the ardour of thy irregular desire, and replenish thy heart with immortal delights.

Lord give me this water, that I may not thirst for ever; spirit of Jesus, fountain of delight, come water my soul, cleanse what is sullied, water what is dry, heal what is wounded; that I may say: "The Most High has sanctified his dwelling place."

3rd Point. Consider—the gift of the Holy Ghost is the fruit of the ascension of Jesus Christ, according to these words of the Psalmist: "Ascending on high, he led captivity captive, he gave gifts to men." (*Ps.* xli) The glory of the Saviour, says St. Jerome, is the triumph of the cross. He is crucified as man, and glorified as God. At his death, the sun is eclipsed, the earth trembles, the graves give up their dead. These prodigies manifest the power and glory of his divinity. Before the Holy Ghost descends, Jesus must be crucified, because this gift is a fruit of his merits. The Holy

Ghost is given to detach our hearts from earth and love of the present life, that they may be animated with a desire of heaven. The most efficacious means for this end is, to show us the glory our head there possesses. Thus did the prince of the Apostles convert three thousand men by his first preaching, saying: "This Jesus hath God raised again, whereof all we are witnesses. Being exalted, therefore, by the right hand of God, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath poured forth this which you see and hear. Therefore, let all the house of Israel know most certainly, that God hath made both Lord and Christ, this same Jesus, whom you have crucified." (*Acts*, ii.) St. Luke adds, that having heard these things, they were touched with compunction of heart.

O my soul, do you demand what is necessary for receiving the Holy Ghost? Do penance; renounce such an attachment; mortify such a passion; overcome such an evil custom. Jesus Christ invites you; fear not to be rejected. "If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink." (*John*, vii.)

PENTECOST SUNDAY.

The Mission of the Holy Ghost.

1st Point. Consider—"They were all filled with the Holy Ghost." (*Acts*, ii.) The Holy Ghost descends to-day, and in virtue of his divine mission, takes the place of the Son of God. He comes to crown the merits of Jesus crucified, as the most admirable fruit of his cross, the recompense worthy of his sufferings. This divine Saviour, appearing to his disciples after his resurrection, and showing them his wounds, as the fur-

nace whence proceeds the living flame of love, or as the hollow place of the rock, whence issues the dove, says: "Receive the Holy Ghost." (*John*, xx.) He says not, as St. Cyril remarks, receive the grace of the Holy Ghost, but, receive the Holy Ghost in person. He imparts to them the fruit of his prayers and tears, of his sufferings and death. An infinite merit demands an infinite recompense. Lord, thou hast crowned with thy benediction the year of thy mercies, and the land shall be covered with an abundant harvest of thy grace. Which is the memorable year that has restored fertility to the earth, stricken with malediction in punishment of sin? The year is the course of the sun in the heavens, and the life of Jesus Christ is the course of the sun of justice on earth. His suffering life is the season of winter; his resurrection, the spring time, when all things are resuscitated; his ascension, the summer; but autumn, which is the harvest, is the mission of the Holy Ghost, the fruit of the death of Jesus Christ, the end and crown of his admirable life.

2nd Point. Consider—the Holy Ghost descends to-day to display the majesty of Jesus Christ, and the splendour of his triumph. The son of God is no sooner ascended to the throne of his glory, rich with the spoils of the earth, than he dispenses to men his munificent gifts. What does he bestow upon them? The Holy Ghost, says St. Augustine. The kings of the earth, to show forth their magnificence in the day of their triumph, impart gifts proportioned to their riches; but those are only earthly gifts, because the kings are earthly. What gift can the King of Heaven give, proportioned to his greatness, unless a God? He gives that Divine Spirit which proceedeth from his Father and himself from eternity. Never could the mind of man conceive the glory of Jesus Christ in heaven, had he not sent us this rich present, this immense gift, this tongue of fire, to publish his power throughout the earth.

Truly, he must be sovereignly great and infinitely good, since what he has bestowed on us is infinite.

Ah! who can worthily praise thee, thou King of glory, who communicatest so liberally to us a gift of no less value than thyself.

3rd POINT. Consider—the Holy Ghost descends this day to establish the law of love in our souls, and to constitute the bond which unites us with Jesus Christ. The heart of man being incapable of loving God, it was necessary, says St. Fulgentius, in order that we might love him, that God should impart himself, since he is charity, and without charity we cannot love. Unless we receive a God, we cannot love a God. The disciple of St. Augustine conceives this noble idea from his master. Therefore, says this father, being animated with so firm a hope, let us love God with the heart of God himself. As the charity of God is shed in our hearts by the coming of his Holy Spirit, we may truly say, let us love with the heart of God. Fear not that the infinitude of his heart is incompatible with the littleness of ours. In the heart of God there is an infinite inclination to bestow, and in the heart of man there is an inclination to receive, that can only be satisfied by an infinite good. Consider that the love testified and communicated to us by the eternal Father is not simply a created and accidental charity: it is a charity increated and substantial, by which we are called, and are made the children of God. As the eternal Father communicates his nature and divine attributes to the Son, so, in imparting the Divine Spirit to the just man, and regenerating him by the infusion of grace, he renders him participant in his nature, and consequently in all his perfections; so that he becomes like God immutable in the love of virtue; passionless, in being elevated above the things of earth; wise, by the unction of the spirit that teacheth all things; holy, by following the movements of grace; in fine, constant, affable, patient, cha-

ritable, and beneficent like God, because children should imitate the virtues of their father. Weigh these qualities, and fail not to profit by the inestimable gift purchased for you by the merits of Jesus Christ.

MONDAY.

The gift of the Holy Ghost compared to that given us in the Son of God.

1st Point. Consider—the union of the Holy Ghost with our souls, resembles in a manner the union of the Divine Word with the sacred humanity of Jesus Christ, in rendering us the children of God by adoption. Therefore, the Fathers of the Church say, the Holy Ghost is the principle of our spiritual nativity. What a favour! Holy Spirit, art thou not as infinitely elevated above us, as heaven is above earth? and nevertheless, thou descendest even to our nothingness, and by the communication of thy divine essence thou makest us the children of God. Who should dare pretend to this honor, if it had not been the free gift of God to us? Consider the love of the eternal Father, and the charity manifested towards us—an increated charity, which exalts us above all that is great upon earth. Do not degenerate from the noble sentiments which should animate the children of God. Despise all that is perishable; and esteem only that which is divine. He who understands the dignity to which he has been raised, can never condescend to what is merely human. He who loves anything that is less than God, fails in that generosity which his state demands.

2nd Point. Consider—the hypostatic union places the soul of Jesus Christ in possession of all the riches of heaven. "For he is the universal heir of the Fa-

ther." (*Heb.* i. 2.) The union of the Holy Ghost, by a like effect, enriches the soul with all spiritual gifts. No sooner has the pious soul gained the heart of God, than she enters into his treasures, and fixes there her abode, saying with confidence: "My beloved to me, and I to him." (*Cant.* i. 12.) He is mine by bounty, and I am his by gratitude. He is mine, because he delights in imparting to me his favours; and I am his, because I delight in doing his will. St. Paul says: "Because you are sons, God hath sent the spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying: Abba, Father." (*Gal.* iv.) Words full of tenderness, that manifest the goodness with which the Holy Spirit, according to the apostles, sustains us in our many weaknesses: in the weakness of the understanding, which is so dull in penetrating eternal truths; the weakness of the will, so estranged from the love of virtue; the weakness of the memory, so forgetful of God; weakness of the mind, in resisting the movements of concupiscence; weakness in action, weakness in suffering, weakness in praying. "For we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit himself asketh for us with unspeakable groanings." (*Rom.* viii.)

3rd Point. Consider—the union with the Divine word elevates the sacred humanity of Jesus Christ, to an absolute dominion over all creatures, as sovereign pontiff and king. The union of the Holy Ghost impresses on our souls a similar character of greatness. He makes kings and priests in eternity, whence the holy Scripture calls the Christian people, who live according to the spirit of Jesus Christ, a holy nation, a royal priesthood. St. Augustine says, that the Holy Ghost descending on the apostles, formed around them a crown composed of tongues of fire. If priests and victims are crowned, the Holy Ghost descends on the apostles and the predestined, as on victims destined to death, who sacrifice their interest, honour, and life itself,

for the glory of God, and are consumed in the fire of divine love, when that of persecution does not offer; but this fire which consumes, forms for them a diadem of glory. This day the Holy Ghost descends on the apostles, as a royal unction, which consecrates them princes of heaven and earth. Heretofore they had received the odour of this divine balm; now they receive the plenitude of its substance. He comes, not only as a trophy of the victory and triumph of Jesus Christ, but also as his successor in the conquest of souls. He comes to serve the Incarnate Word, as a triumphal chariot, to bear him into all hearts; and as an impetuous wind, to waft the apostles as victorious conquerors to the extremities of the earth. In fine, the end of the mission of the Holy Ghost is to make us gods, and the children of the Most High. The Son of God sends to his elect, as a mark of their adoption, his cross, the instrument of his victories, and his divine love, the crown of the saints.

TUESDAY.

Of the great love God bears us, considered in the mission of the Holy Spirit.

1st Point. Consider—the depth of this love, by which he descends from the splendour of his glory, even unto the dust of which we are formed; and without regarding other qualities but that of his children, receives with equal tenderness the lowliest slave, and the greatest monarch, permitting, even commanding, all to call him Father. He descends from the height of his perfections into the abyss of our imperfections: for he loves us, notwithstanding our defects. How many gross and stupid minds are there? nevertheless, this brightness of eternal light beholds them with complacency

and love. How many are there of a gloomy and melancholy temper? yet this God of meekness and charity receives them into his heart, and caresses them as his children. He watches continually with a jealous eye over the safety of a miserable creature. He descends from his sovereign munificence unto our ingratitude; he loves us notwithstanding our cold indifference; he presents his graces, though we refuse them; he confers favors for which we do not render thanks; we are always present to his thoughts, though we seldom hold him in remembrance. "Lord, what is man that thou art mindful of him?" (*Ps.* viii. 8.) His body is but dust, his soul a monument of thy benefits, his understanding darkness, his heart selfishness, his memory forgetfulness; yet, thou rememberest him, and thy love triumphest over his ingratitude.

2nd Point. Consider—the extent of this love by which the Father wills all men to be saved. He wills it if you will it, and offers his grace to excite the desire, and his aid to obtain it. The Son wills it, since he died for all, and calls all men with a design of saving them: "Come ye all to me." My heart is an inexhaustible source of bounty to efface every crime. Come to me and I will refresh you. Yours is the sin, mine the remedy. Come all to me, for my word cannot be without effect. It is a net cast into the sea of the world to enclose all men, a trumpet with which my apostles call every one to the conquest of heaven. Come all to me; powerful voice, which has triumphed over the nations of the earth! Salutary word, source of salvation, word of empire, that has captivated the universe to the yoke of faith! Word of holiness, purifying the world. In fine, the Holy Ghost wills it, for he has filled the house of God: and though all are not disposed to receive him, nevertheless he comes for the sanctification of all. Such is the measure and extent of this love.

3rd Point. Consider—the charity of God is eternal. His love for us is without a commencement; therefore this eternal prevention of love imposes on us an obligation of loving him irrevocably. He loves us without interruption, because he is immutable. Interest often changes the human heart; passion extinguishes friendship; forgetfulness effaces it; but God is the sovereign wisdom; he cannot be deceived in his choice; he is infinite goodness, therefore his charity is continually active. He loves us without end, and sanctifying grace, the bond of this charity, is a gift which can only be lost through our own fault. Learn hence what your love should be. Let it abase you in your own nothingness, and render you perfectly submissive to the divine will. Let it elevate you by a generous contempt of creatures, above all that is not God. Let it extend even to your greatest enemies. Let it begin from this moment, to continue for eternity. Is it much that man, who is but a little dust, should, with all his strength, reciprocally love the infinite majesty, who so ardently thirsts for his salvation?

WEDNESDAY.

The opposition we give to the inspirations of the Holy Ghost.

1st Point. Consider—divine love is to the heart what the soul is to the body. What is the effect of love? It detaches from earth and elevates towards heaven: it is saddened by offences offered to God, and it compassionates the miseries of the neighbour. Did there exist a spark of that divine fire which the Holy Ghost enkindles in the heart, it would consume the rust of earthly affections. Fire continually ascends to its sphere, and the just man, in whom the fire of charity

burns, remains on earth but by restraint and necessity. He understands the saying of St. Bernard, that to find God we must quit creatures and renounce self. Is this the ordinary subject of your meditations? Are your sentiments thus generous? Is the love you bear yourself grafted on the love of God? Do you love health only for his service? Do you enjoy no relaxation but that which he approves and permits? Do you desire consolations, or the goods or conveniences of this life, but in as much as they are necessary? I am filled with confusion, says St. Jerome, when I behold the ardour with which worldlings seek the goods of fortune. Their desire of riches is insatiable, their ambition unbounded; they are passionate in the pursuit of that which ends in a moment, and we neglect by a blind tepidity the treasures of divine wisdom, the riches of heaven, and immortal glory.

2nd Point. Consider—that divine love teaches us to converse familiarly with God. A soul possessing the treasure of charity, entertains a continual remembrance of the divine presence, speaking to God, heart to heart, and communicating to him the least designs, consulting neither passion, interest, nor human respect, but only the will of God, and making the Gospel the rule of all her enterprises. Under sufferings—she looks not to secondary causes, but addresses herself to God with filial confidence, seeking consolation in the bosom of infinite mercy. In prosperity she remembers her own nothingness, and returns all to the glory of her Benefactor. In fine, she is a lover of prayer, and often withdraws into the solitude of her own heart, to treat with God of her eternal salvation. The Holy Ghost, as a divine master, instructs us in the science of prayer, and aids us thereto with the succour of his grace. But who hears him with pleasure, or profits under this heavenly guide? In those places specially destined for prayer, while present in body, is not the mind, which should

be fixed on heaven, embarrassed with a thousand idle thoughts? Does that soul love God who thinks of him only by constraint, that speaks to him without recollection or due reverence, or to whom the time of prayer or spiritual reading appears dry and tedious?

3rd Point. Consider—"Charity hath grown cold in the hearts of many." All say they love God, yet hate his image in their brethren. They love God, yet abandon the poor who are his members. They love God, yet give all to nature, nothing to grace—all to pleasure, nothing to true piety. They love God, yet they never think of him; their own will is preferred to his on all occasions. However, all make profession of loving God, no one would pass for his enemy. That is to say, charity is on the lips, coldness in the breast; this may deceive men: but will it stand before him who sounds the depth of the heart? Will he be satisfied with words? "Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of my Father, who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." (*Matt.* vii. 21.) Meditate these words of our Saviour, and place his love as a seal upon your heart, and upon your hands; but as you cannot do this of yourself, he sends the Holy Ghost to reign over all the powers of your soul, and banish therefrom the spirit of the world. Beseech this divine spirit so to impress the seal of his love on your soul, that death itself may not be able to break it.

THURSDAY.

On the Holy Ghost as the Guest of our Souls.

1st Point. Consider—"And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Paraclete, that he may

abide with you for ever. The Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, nor knoweth him ; but you shall know him, because he shall abide with you and shall be in you." (*John*, xiv. 16, 17.) Our souls are the temples of the Holy Ghost. He enters by the memory, the understanding, and will; sometimes by a remembrance of his benefits, and of that beneficence with which he supports our defects ; sometimes by new lights shed in the understanding, and discovering important truths never before conceived ; again, by sweet attractions gaining the will, and replenishing it with love and joy. But he comes not in the tumult of passions. He comes sweetly breathing peace. He would have us desirous of his presence, and receive him with gratitude and love. Admire his infinite bounty, and consider what an honour to have God a guest in our heart. Sigh continually after him, and say with the universal Church: Creating Spirit, come, possess our souls, and with thy presence bless ; and in our hearts, framed by thy hand, let thy celestial grace command.

2nd Point. Consider—the Holy Ghost knocks at the door of the heart, but finding it closed, he enters not. Sometimes he enters and remains not, because he meets therein infidelity and inconstancy. Do you desire that the spirit of Jesus remain always with you? Be you always submissive to his inspirations; make him reign in your heart ; let the spirit of the world and the flesh find no place therein; for, according to St. Gregory Nazianzen, the Holy Ghost is master, for "the spirit breatheth where he will," on whom he will, when he will, and as much as he will. Expect not to enjoy his presence unless you abandon yourself to his guidance. He is jealous of the empire of your heart; he will reign there alone. Suffer him to act as he pleases: whether he breathe softly, or come as the impetuous wind. Say to him with the spouse: Arise, O north

wind, and come, O south wind, blow through my garden, and let the aromatical spices thereof flow." (*Cant.* iv. 16.) It is thine to command, and mine to obey. Thy conduct is different, but thou art always the same spirit, and I owe thee at all times equal submission and love.

3rd Point. Consider—the Holy Ghost enters the heart with desire, dwells there with pleasure, and quits it only with sorrow. As his presence is the source of all good, so is his absence of all evil. Sin has two fatal effects; it deprives us of sanctifying grace, and consequently of all virtues and supernatural gifts; so that there remain but faith and hope, which the divine mercy leaves for our conversion. It deprives us of the Holy Ghost, through whom we are made the children of God Sanctifying grace is the bond that unites the soul with God; when sin has broken this bond, the divine spirit withdraws his love and grace; consequently, we are no longer children of God, "partakers of the divine nature" (*Pet.* i. 4), or heirs of his heavenly kingdom, but slaves destined to eternal flames. A spectacle of sorrow! to see the spirit of love abandon an unhappy soul which falls from the pinnacle of honour into the depth of ignominy; of a child of God become a slave of the devil; of a friend, become an enemy; of an inheritor of heaven, the prey of hell. How insensible we are to our spiritual evils. "I have sinned," says the impious, "and what harm hath befallen me?" (*Eccles.* v. 4.) O prodigy of blindness! we weep the loss of a friend, and we behold with indifference God depart from the soul.

Come, Father of the poor, graciously vouchsafe to enter into my heart, that I may become inebriated with thy love, and lose the remembrance of all my evils in contemplating thy beauty, O God of love, for thou alone shall be henceforth the master of all its affections. Hide not thy countenance from thy poor servant. Let

me die to myself, that I may behold thee; lest beholding thee not, I perish eternally

FRIDAY.

On the marks of the Holy Ghost dwelling in the Soul.

1st Point. Consider—"They were all filled with the Holy Ghost." (*Acts*, ii.) The first mark of the Holy Ghost dwelling in the soul, is a filial fear and profound reverence for the majesty of God, who is everywhere present. The gift of fear is the precursor of the Holy Ghost, who comes as fire from heaven, that causes the earth to tremble to its centre. According to St. Gregory Nazianzen, he inflames the soul with the fire of his love, and terrifies it with the lightning of his countenance. The spirit of the world contemns holy things, and the sinner who serves God without respect, offends him without remorse. The soul in which the Holy Ghost dwells, knows the value of the treasure possessed, and the fragility of the vessel in which it is contained; therefore it trembles at every step. This fear is a morally infallible sign of his presence, and a happy presage of salvation. This filial awe is accompanied by spiritual joy, with which the gift of piety inspires the true children of God, in those exercises of devotion which regard the honour and service of their heavenly Father. Love is the source of joy, and the Holy Ghost, who is the increated love, produces in the soul a sovereign and ineffable joy. "Sing, praise, and rejoice, O daughter of Sion; for behold I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord." (*Psalm*, ii. 10.)

2nd Point. Consider—another mark of the Holy Ghost dwelling in the soul, is a great courage, which elevates us above all the goods and evils of the present life, by a generous contempt inspired by the gift of

fortitude. Man being the end of this visible world, is consequently created for a more noble end than the world. God is the centre to which he should aspire with all the powers of his soul. Man, at his creation, was endowed with the spirit of love, that raised him above all creatures; but, yielding to the artifices of the serpent, he became disunited from his centre, and enslaved to terrestrial objects. Hence that weakness observable in the sinner, who, having lost the love of God, is possessed by a servile fear, which sees only objects of terror that harrow his soul with present sorrow, and terrify him with the dread of future evils. But when the Paraclete enters the soul, and therein proclaims the law of love, he restores man to all his lost advantages, and thenceforth the faithful soul, fortified by this grace, and animated with a holy confidence, generously raises itself above all that seems either estimable or formidable in nature. All that the world contains in the circle of its vanities, becomes an object of contempt, because the light of the Holy Ghost discovers that it is a shameful baseness in him who is heir to a heavenly empire, to become the slave of earth, and to cast himself beneath that which God has placed under his feet. The soul animated by the Holy Ghost displays not less courage under sufferings, though all the evils of life combine in assailing it; the soul that possesses God, having nothing to fear, remains firm and tranquil, passes courageously through peril and death, that it may for ever enjoy him who is the source of life.

3rd Point. Consider—the third mark of the Holy Ghost dwelling in the soul, is the light infused into the mind by the gifts of counsel, knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. By the gift of counsel, he speaks as a faithful friend, directing every action, and resolving every difficulty. By the gift of knowledge, he speaks as a master, teaching to judge soundly of all things,

shewing that the goods of this life being transitory, we should seek those that are eternal; as its evils are passing, that they should be turned to profit; that poverty is a treasure; the flight of honour, an approach towards God; corporal maladies, the health of the soul; and death, an entrance into life. By the gift of wisdom he discovers the divine perfections in all their splendour, manifesting that as God is infinitely powerful, it is blindness not to fear him; and being the sovereign good, he merits the love of all hearts. By the gift of understanding he so manifests the mysteries of religion, that the obscurity of faith seems thereby removed. By this gift the soul understands how it is possible that they who suffer persecution are blessed, that there is honour in bearing contempt, and that the flight of worldly pleasure is solid joy to the predestinate. Ask yourself, in the words of St. Paul: "Have you received the Holy Ghost?" (*Acts*, xix. 2.) Are you practically convinced of the maxims of the Gospel? Do you relish spiritual things? Have you the courage necessary for tending to perfection, whatever it may cost? Do you feel a spiritual joy in the practice of mortification and good works? In fine, have you that filial fear which shuns the least sin as a great evil? If these are not your dispositions, you must beseech the Divine Spirit to enter into your heart, and prepare it for his reception by sighs of compunction and fervent desires.

SATURDAY.

On the reign of the Holy Ghost in our Hearts.

1st Point. Consider—"And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they began to speak with divers tongues, according as the Holy Ghost gave them

to speak." (*Acts*, ii. 4.) The Holy Ghost reigns in the heart, because he is the Spirit of Love, and love has its seat in the heart. Amongst all poor creatures he has no more delightful dwelling place than in the heart of the immaculate Virgin. Her soul and body are his consecrated temples. The Spirit of God, says St. Anselm, the reciprocal love of the Father and the Son, reposes in her by a singular grace, choosing her preferably to all that is created in heaven or on earth, as his beloved spouse and queen of the universe. Meditate in particular the manner in which he communicates himself to her. Previous to the Incarnation he prepared her to become the Mother of God: on the day of Pentecost he comes to her as a spouse, and distributes through her hands the treasures of grace. Therefore we should honour her with all the powers of our soul, and affections of our heart, for such is the good pleasure of God, who, according to St. Bernard, would have us receive all good things through Mary.

2nd Point. Consider—the reign of the Holy Ghost in the hearts of the apostles; how admirable the change instantly wrought by the light shed in their understanding, the gift of tongues they received, the fortitude and zeal with which they were inspired for the preaching of the Gospel! What incredible success did he impart to their words, which are the breath of his trumpet, to proclaim the truth to all nations! O Spirit of God! when wilt thou touch my heart? When wilt thou change my weakness into strength, my tepidity into fervour, and my ignorance into the science of salvation? Consider, also, the glorious empire of the Divine Spirit in the primitive Christians, and the miracles of grace he operated in their hearts. "And all they that believed, were together, and had all things in common. Their possessions they sold, and divided them to all, according as every one had need. And continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread

from house to house, they took their meat with gladness and simplicity of heart: praising God and having favour with all the people. And they increased daily together, such as should be saved." (*Acts*, ii. 44.)

3rd Point. Consider—the joy of the Blessed Virgin in the happy commencement of the reign of her Divine Son, and the conquest of so many souls, now ranked under the standard of the cross. With what tenderness did her heart embrace those "first fruits to God and to the Lamb?" (*Apoc.* iv. 4.) With what sweet and powerful words did she instruct and encourage them in the pursuit of virtue, teaching them the inestimable glory of being the first children of the Church, the first fruits of the cross, and of the coming of the Divine Spirit. She could say with more experimental feeling than the apostles: "I have no greater grace than this, to hear that my children walk in truth." (*John*, i.) This tender Mother will entertain the same sentiments for you, if you practise the virtues of the primitive Christians; for this sacred Virgin encloses within her maternal heart all whose lives are conformable to the doctrine preached by her Divine Son, published by his apostles, and practised by the first Christians. Endeavour, therefore, to repair the past by aiming generously at the perfection of a Christian life. Thus will you rejoice the Holy Ghost, prove your gratitude to the heart that bled for you on Calvary, and console that immaculate Mother who stood sorrow-stricken at the foot of the cross.

FESTIVAL OF THE HOLY TRINITY.

On the glory we should render to the Most Holy Trinity.

1st Point. Consider—The most Holy Trinity is the centre of glory, whither tend all the works of the

Creator. All that is in heaven, on earth, and under the earth, according to St. John, sing in concert the praises of one God in three persons: "And every creature which is in heaven, on earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard all saying: To him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, benediction, and honour, and glory, and power, for ever and ever." (*Apoc.* v 13.) The eternal occupation of the blessed is to chant the sacred canticle, "Holy, Holy, Holy, the Lord God of hosts." (*Isaiah* vi. 3.) The earth is a great temple consecrated to the honour of this adorable mystery. In Purgatory, in a special manner, is exemplified this profound esteem and homage of the most Holy Trinity, from the intense desire of the sufferers to enjoy it. If then we aspire to beatitude, we should commence here below what we hope to continue in heaven for all eternity, and thus accomplish the prediction: "All shall render glory to the Lord in his temple." Even hell itself glorifies the sacred Trinity, for the reprobates are constrained, in deploring their eternal loss of all the benefits of nature, grace, and glory, to offer a reparation of honour to the power of the Father, who is author of nature, to the wisdom of the Son, whose grace they have despised, and to the goodness of the Holy Ghost, whose saving inspirations they have criminally rejected.

2nd Point. Consider—the special obligation of man, amongst all creatures, to glorify the most Holy Trinity. Man is the master-piece of the creation, a resplendent image of the three divine persons. God has redeemed man preferably to the angels. In baptism man is consecrated to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, by an inviolable character impressed on his soul. My brethren, says St. Fildebert, never forget the vows of your baptism, offered to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. The Church is the witness of your vow; and by it you are pledged to worship and honour the

three divine persons. If you violate the vow made to the Father, you no longer possess a right to the inheritance of his children; if you fail in fidelity to the Son, you lose the fruit of his merits. In fine, if you lie to the Holy Ghost, you extinguish the charity he has shed in your heart. The eternal Father has adopted man as his child, giving him dominion over all that is on earth; the Son calls him by the name of brother, the Holy Ghost regards him as his temple. But that which surpasses all understanding, is the honour conferred on man in giving him a Man-God to supply his deficiency in adoring the supreme Trinity, thus perfectly discharging a debt which must otherwise remain eternally unpaid. What honour can man render to God equal to that which he has received? How shall he acquit himself of an obligation of such inexpressible love? By offering up the thanksgiving of the Divine Advocate whom he has received.

3rd Point. Consider—that glory essential appertains to the most holy Trinity, and man alone, amongst visible creatures, is capable of rendering that glory. To him is confided, as a precious deposit, the honour which the Creator designs to draw from his works. Happy he who understands the value of the treasure he bears, and who preserves it with fidelity! How guilty he by whom it is lost or dissipated! Man is as a tree planted by the eternal Father, watered with the blood of his divine Son, cultivated by the Holy Ghost, that it may produce the glory which is the only fruit that can be acceptable to the three divine persons. If man reflect on his origin, God is its principle and author. If he look to his last end, God is his sovereign beatitude. If he enter into the consideration of himself, he finds God in the essence of his being. To know God and to love him, is the sovereign good of man in time and eternity. By an admirable wisdom, he has so united our interest with his own glory, that

in doing all for him, he does all for us. In taking all, he gives all; and as he places his glory in our salvation, so our salvation consists in offering him that glory.

To thee it appertains, O adorable Saviour, to say: I glorify my Father. Thou art his essential glory, and through thee he hath been glorified in his saints. May thy name impart a value to the weak tribute of my praise, whilst with heart and lips I repeat: Glory be to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.

MONDAY.

On the Love we owe the three Divine Persons.

1st Point. Consider—the love we owe the eterna Father. The name of Father imports the love he bears to us, and reciprocally demands in return. God is our father by creation; who "hath possessed thee, and made thee, and created thee." (*Deut.* xxxii. 6.) Father, by the providence with which he watches over his children. Father, by predestination: "Who hath predestinated us unto the adoption of children through Jesus Christ." (*Eph.* i 5.) Father, by the preaching of the Gospel: "For of his own will hath he begotten us by the word of truth." (*James.* i 18.) Father, by regeneration in baptism: "Unless man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." (*John.* i. 5.) Father, by justification and infusion of sanctifying grace: "And because you are sons, God hath sent the spirit of his Son into your hearts." (*Gal.* iv. 6.) Father, by the communication of glory: "Because the creature also itself shall be delivered from the servitude of corruption, into the liberty of the glory of the children of God." (*Rom.* viii. 21.) Is it not with justice this Father demands a return of love? Who shall we love, if not

him who has given us being as many times as there are moments in our life? O unexampled and immeasurable love! Love unknown, or rather despised in the world! For it would seem we have hearts only to attach them to creatures, in contempt of Him who is Creator of all. Listen to the complaint of unrequited love: "I have brought up children, and they have despised me."

2nd POINT. Consider—from the Blessed Virgin we learn the love we should render to the Divine Word whether considered as Son of God or Son of Man. She loved him for innumerable reasons, but above all, she loved him as Son of God. This motive being common to us with her, should produce in us the same effect. In this quality Jesus Christ should absorb all our affections, as he is the object of the complacency of his eternal Father. But next to the glorious title of Son of God, it would seem that Son of Man, and consequently Son of the Blessed Virgin, is peculiarly touching, especially as in this quality he has given himself to us in the excess of his love; given himself without reserve; given us all, his tears, his blood, his very life. Can we, without the blackest ingratitude, refuse to give ourselves unreservedly to him, saying with St. Augustine: "May I die for love of thy love, since thou wouldst die for love of me. Mayest thou be my all, since thou wert pleased to make me thine."

3rd POINT. Consider—the Holy Ghost being the Spirit of the Father and the Son, we owe him an equal love with them. He is the spirit of love, through whom the Father has given us his only begotten Son, according to St. Paul. What, therefore, should be our love for this Holy Spirit, the Spirit of life, the Spirit through whom alone Jesus Christ lives in us, the Spirit who of sinners makes us saints? Are we not obliged by gratitude and justice, to devote ourselves without reserve to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, since what-

ever we are or have, we have received solely from these three adorable persons?

O blessed Trinity! the three powers of my soul sigh after thee. Grant, Lord, that I may remember thee; grant that I may know thee; grant, that I may love thee. Let the remembrance of thee be the treasure of my memory, the knowledge of thee be the light of my mind, thy love the life of my heart. May these three gifts be augmented by thy grace, until the powers of my soul may be perfectly purified and reformed here, and afterwards rewarded by the possession of thy eternal glory.

TUESDAY.

On the Reverence we owe to the Three Divine Persons.

1st Point. Consider—the reverence due to the power of the eternal Father. His power is unbounded, extending to all places; consequently, we cannot fly from it. How blind the sinner who hopes to escape this power, which is more elevated than the heavens, more profound than the abyss, longer than the earth, broader than the sea. His power is absolute over all creatures: wherefore, it is a more dreadful evil to offend him, than to draw upon ourselves the wrath of all creation, since he can use creatures at his will, as instruments of his vengeance. "Shall not the land tremble for this, and be cast out, and run down as the river of Egypt." (*Amos*, viii. 8.) He reaches to all times, and even to eternity. He punishes sin, not only during the present life, but he has lighted up an inextinguishable fire to perpetuate his vengeance; a fire that torments without destroying, that punishes without expiating. O power *alone* to be feared! How deeply should we meditate the words of the Saviour: "Fear

ye him, who after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell." (*Luke*, xii. 5.) His power is infinite in extent, absolute in dominion, eternal in duration.

2nd Point. Consider—the reverence due to the wisdom of the divine word. From this increated wisdom, nothing can be concealed: the eyes of the Lord are far brighter than the sun, beholding round about all the ways of men, and the bottom of the deep, and looking into the heart of men, into the most hidden parts. For all things were known to the Lord God, before they were created; so also, after they were perfected, he beholdeth all things. (*Eccl.* xxiii. 28, 29.) In vain shall the sinner use hypocrisy or dissimulation: the eye of God discovers all, and as nothing can be effected without his concurrence, so nothing can escape the omniscience of the supreme intelligence. Senseless man, what sayest thou? And they have said: the Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob understand. Understand, ye senseless among the people: and you, fools, be wise at last. He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? or he that formed the eye, doth he not consider? He that chastiseth nations, shall he not rebuke: he that teacheth man knowledge? The Lord knoweth the thoughts of men, that they are vain. With what profound reverence for the majesty of the divine word should this thought impress us, since it is more shameful for the sinner to offend in his presence, than if he were exposed to the eyes of all angels and men.

3rd Point. Consider—the reverence due to the sanctity of the Holy Ghost. In order to destroy the presumption of sinners, and deeply impress their minds with the fear of God, it suffices not to say, that his eye discovers, his power chastises evil; we must add, his spirit cannot endure, and is resolved on its destruction. Such is the opposition between sanctity and sin, that the commission of even one, blights the holiness of the

greatest saint. The spirit of God is ever opposed to sin. During this life his mercy draws the sinner to repentance, which effaces sin, and restores life to the sinner; but after death, he will be delivered over to justice, that will punish with inflexible rigour for all eternity. Conclude this meditation, uniting these three attributes in one God, before whom the seraphim tremble with respect, and say with profound humility: O Lord, my God, how infinite thy power, which no one can resist! How awful thy sanctity, when opposed to my innumerable sins! Alas! had I been faithful to thy love, thou wouldst employ thy power in succouring my necessities, thy wisdom in conducting me, thy sanctity in working my salvation. But when I provoke thee by sin, thy power smites the malice of my heart; thy wisdom discovers it; thy sanctity pursues it without ceasing.

What can I do, O my God, but cast myself on thy mercy, beseeching thee to remedy all my disorders? "Prove me, O God, and know my heart; examine me, and know my paths; and see if there be in me the way of iniquity: and lead me in the eternal way." (*Ps.* cxxxviii. 23, 24.)

WEDNESDAY.

On Devotion to the most Holy Trinity.

1st Point. Consider—the worship of the most holy Trinity is the characteristic of Christianity. The Christian professes to adore one God in three persons, by a grace peculiar to the law of love. This is the first lesson taught him in making the sign of the cross (in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost), to show that the knowledge of the adorable Trinity is a fruit of the merits and sufferings of

Jesus Christ. Three divine persons in unity of essence, is the object of our beatitude in heaven, and the principle of our sanctification on earth. One day we shall be blessed in beholding them, if now we are faithful in their love. To this end tend all the graces, which through Jesus Christ we have acquired. "No man cometh to the Father but by me." (*John*, xiv. 16.) The Father draws us by a sweet communication of love, and an humble submission on our part to his adorable will. The Son draws us by conformity to himself in a life of recollection in the bosom of his eternal Father. The Holy Ghost draws us by fidelity and pure love, that we may be strictly united by and with him to the Father and the Son, in order that the union of these divine persons may be the continual object of our thoughts and affections.

2nd Point. Consider—the most solid practice of devotion towards the most Holy Trinity, consists in imitation: according to the maxim of the Fathers, the most perfect act of religion is to imitate that which you honour. In imitation of this adorable Trinity, let your mind be continually occupied in contemplating the divine perfections. This reflection should be followed by a great love for God, and contempt of self, for we cannot know God without loving him, or know ourselves without a contempt for our own nothingness. Your love for God should extend to your neighbour, uniting you with him by the bond of perfect charity, whatever difference may exist of temper, condition, occupation, or inclination. A sterile affection, or passing tenderness of heart, satisfies not this obligation; your charity must be active in relieving the necessities of your neighbour. The seal of your perfection, and completion of the image of the three divine persons in your soul, is a sincere and ardent zeal, by which, while forgetful of self, you feel in a lively manner the injuries done to God or your neighbour. This seal of the most

Holy Trinity will render you invincible, if, by a criminal negligence or infidelity, you suffer it not to be effaced by the enemy.

3rd Point. Consider—to an imitation of the most Holy Trinity must be added an invocation of the divine persons. Accustom yourself, therefore, to commence all your actions by the sign of the cross, saying: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. During the course of the action, frequently elevate your heart to God, saying with the seraphim—Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts! Reflect on the obligation of rendering your works so perfect, that they may be worthy of appearing to the eyes of God, whose sanctity is infinite and cannot endure what is defective. Beseech the eternal Father to destroy in you all irregular love of honour, and vain esteem of creatures. Supplicate the Son of God to purify your heart from every stain of self-love, and impress thereon a total disgust of the gratification of the senses. Invoke the Holy Ghost to eradicate from your soul all inordinate attachment to the goods of the earth, to your own conveniences and interest. Finally, conclude your actions by a return of the heart to God, imploring pardon for the faults committed, and referring to him all the good effected—saying, Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. Thus the Church terminates the psalms she chaunts in honour of God. Thus you should terminate your mortal life to commence a blessed eternity.

FESTIVAL OF CORPUS CHRISTI.

On Reverence due to the most Holy Sacrament.

1st Point. Consider—the presence of God, whose sanctity consecrates the universe as a temple, should

everywhere impress us with veneration and awe, but in no place should this sentiment be more profound than in the presence of the Eucharistic species. This sacrament is the throne of his glory on earth, where we render homage to his sacred humanity, as a reparation for the ignominy of the cross. The homage there offered should, if possible, equal the opprobrium he has suffered for sin. To a lively faith this tremendous mystery is not less touching than the actual spectacle of his death on Calvary. The altar whereon he reposes is the seat of holiness, since he is there as the source of sanctity, the author and consummator of our sanctification. He is there surrounded by an infinity of miracles, which render his presence more august and venerable. The works therein operated are inconceivable; the mysteries there renewed, incomprehensible. If the life of Jesus Christ was a solemn oblation, commencing at the crib and terminating on Calvary, is not the Eucharistic sacrifice of the altar the life and death of Jesus Christ, perpetuated to the consummation of ages? St. Chrysostom assures us, that when the priest pronounces the words of consecration, the heavens open, and the blessed spirits descend to adore the Holy of Holies, prostrate in profound awe before the altar until the consummation of the divine mysteries.

2nd Point. Consider—if the angels of heaven, who are by nature so noble and excellent, annihilate themselves in the presence of Jesus Christ, with what sentiments should you present yourself before his throne? Who are you that dare to mingle with the princes of his court, and pretend to the caresses of the heavenly King? With what astonishment and profound awe should you contemplate this Saviour in the splendour of his perfections, who, notwithstanding your unworthiness, designs to enter into your heart. "Is it credible that God should dwell with men on the earth? If heaven and the heavens of heavens do not contain thee, how

much less this house which I have built." (2 *Paral.*vi.18.) What! shall the Sovereign Lord, the Omnipotent God, the Holy of Holies, in whose presence purity itself is not unspotted, vouchsafe to enter a heart so tepid, so imperfect as mine? What shall I say to this divine Lord? What reception can I offer worthy this heavenly King? What will he say on entering this cold ungenerous heart? Will he not behold with indignation a lodging so unsuited to his greatness? Ah! Lord, I am alike overwhelmed by thy immensity and my own nothingness. Suffer me to sink more deeply in that nothingness, that thou alone mayest be absolute master of my entire being.

3rd Point. Consider—with what sentiments the saints approached the Son of God in this mystery of the Blessed Eucharist. What reverential awe appeared on the countenance! what profound humility in the heart! how deeply penetrated with their own unworthiness! If the vision of an angel caused the prophet Daniel to tremble with fear, with what sentiments should you be impressed when you appear before Jesus Christ, your God and your Saviour! Should you not feel as it were annihilated in approaching him? Were God to honour you by making you the instrument of his miraculous power in creating new worlds, raising the dead, drawing the reprobate souls from the infernal abyss, with what reverence would you unite with him to receive the influence of this power? Are you engaged in a work less tremendous, when present at the sacrifice of the *Lamb that taketh away the sins of the world?* Does not Jesus Christ take a new existence under the sacramental species? Does he not again become incarnate, and immolate himself on the altar for the salvation of mankind? The tongue on which he is laid when he descends from heaven; the heart in which he takes a new life, should it not tremble in receiving this precious deposit, that heaven itself sustains not without fear?

O Lord, my God, to thy mercy I have recourse, for I am seized with terror when I approach the altar of which thou offerest the adorable sacrifice. My soul is awe-stricken, my heart trembles, and my spirit fainteth away, when I enter thy sanctuary and mingle with the spirits that surround thy throne. Let thy clemency, my Saviour, sustain my weakness, since thou ordainest that I bear the weight of thy greatness.

FRIDAY.

On the change of heart required for approaching the Holy Communion.

1st Point. Consider—in virtue of the Holy Communion we are obliged to die to ourselves, and assume a new life, by a perfect conversion of heart. This death, and this conversion, is not simply a counsel; it is a strict obligation: "For as often as you shall eat this bread, and drink the chalice, you shall show the death of the Lord until he come." This implies the necessity of dying to the world and our evil inclinations; for no one can draw life from this heavenly banquet, unless by this mystic death and spiritual resurrection you can say, "I live now, not I: but Christ liveth in me." (*Gal.* ii. 20.) Observe in these words, the obligation contracted at the sacred table, both before and after the Holy Communion. Before receiving the bread of angels you must die to sin; for "whosoever shall eat this bread, or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." (1 *Cor.* xi. 29.) How heinous the offence; how deplorable the condition of him who approaches the Holy of Holies with a conscience sullied with crime, without sentiment of sorrow, without a desire of amendment. The dispositions, O Lord, for approaching thy throne,

are judgment and justice. Examine, religious soul, who so often approach this holy table, have you a horror of deliberate venial sin? Do you endeavour, by sincere compunction, to efface the faults of negligence or inadvertence? Have you a determined resolution of correcting all habitual defects? Sound your own heart; are you a friend or an enemy? The bread you receive is life to the good, while it gives death to the sinner.

2nd Point. Consider—that after being admitted to the Holy Communion, you must lead a new life, because in virtue of the divine Eucharist you should be transformed into a new man, which is no other than Jesus Christ; for in the Man-God all is new! His birth, life, doctrine, virtues, death, resurrection, and ascension, all are new and marvellous. Consequently, in virtue of the union contracted with him in the Holy Sacrament, you should be clothed with the qualities of the new man; that is to say, you should so faithfully imitate the Son of God, and practise the virtues he has taught, that it may be said *Jesus Christ liveth in you.* Make not your weakness an excuse, for you receive a remedying grace in this adorable sacrament, which is not only the model, but also the principle of our conversion; since its effect is to nourish charity and weaken self-love. For those who are truly faithful, and who incessantly labour for the amendment of their life, frequently receive in this most august sacrament, the grace of an increased devotion and love of virtue.

3rd Point. Consider—perfect conversion implies the destruction and flight of sin. The blood of Jesus Christ effaces in the sacrament of penance, it preserves from sin in the divine Eucharist. Penance raises the dead, the Eucharist nourishes the living. Penance purifies the seeds of virtue, the Eucharist renders them fruitful. The Holy Eucharist seals our conversion by the miraculous change it operates in the powers of the

soul; in the understanding, by the light it sheds therein; in the will, by the strength it imparts in resisting evil customs; in the heart, by repressing the violence of passion; extinguishing the flames of concupiscence, by the augmentation of charity; rendering the weak and imperfect, strong and invincible; and the earthly and selfish, spiritual and divine. Whence then are there so many communions, and so few conversions? If this holy sacrament is the source of light, whence is it that we remain in darkness? If it is the source of love, whence is it that we are so cold? If it is the fountain of grace, whence are we so weak? Alas! the goodness of God is not wanting to us; but we are insensible to the attractions of his goodness. He comes in the holy communion to sanctify us, but we remain voluntarily in our defects; and approach with a will rebellious to his grace, and an enemy to our own happiness.

Ah! Lord, vouchsafe to impart a remedy to the disorder of my will, accomplish in my regard the prophecy of holy Simeon; be thou my ruin and my resurrection; destroy sin in my soul, effect therein the resurrection of virtue.

SATURDAY.

On the Holy Eucharist as the bread of the strong.

1st Point. Consider—"Thou hast prepared a table before me against them that afflict me." (*Ps.* xxii. 5.) The most holy sacrament is called the bread of the strong, because those who are nourished therewith are obliged to curb their passions, and generously to combat all that could trouble the peace of the heart. "Behold three score valiant ones of the most valiant of Israel, surround the bed of Solomon, all holding swords," (*Cant.* iii. 7,) to the end that nothing may trouble his

repose. "The bed of Solomon" is the heart of the Christian who communicates; it should be covered with flowers, that is to say, ornamented with every virtue; "Behold the tabernacle of God with men, and he will dwell with them. And they shall be his people; and God himself with them shall be their God." (*Rev.* xxi. 3.) When quitting this earth to return to the bosom of his Father, Jesus Christ chose the tabernacle wherein the most holy Sacrament is deposited, and our heart, as the place of his repose. Faithful souls who communicate often, are the "valiant ones of Israel," who surround his tent. They should be generous, vigilant, always armed, and ready to combat their enemies. The place of his dwelling must be calm and peaceful: wherefore banish thence rebellious passions, irregular desires, and inordinate affections, that the King of peace may enter and dwell therein.

2nd Point. Consider—the holy sacrament is called the bread of the strong, not only because the Son of God requires that those who are nourished therewith should be victorious over temptation, but also because this bread imparts strength and vigour for the combat. If David was fortified even by the foresight of this heavenly feast, what strength should its actual participation bestow? "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me, and I in him." (*John*, vi.) I am in God, says St. Augustine; what more strong? God is in me; what more sweet? "Though I walk in the midst of the shadows of death, I shall fear no evil, because thou art with me. Thou hast prepared a table before me against them that afflict me." (*Ps.* xxii.) In effect, says St. Chrysostom, who are those that persecute and torment us? They are the temptations of the enemy, the agitation of passions, irregular desires, the pleasures and horrors of the world. But in approaching the table of the Omnipotent, these afflictions are changed into consolations, because that which is

according to the flesh is replaced by that of the spirit.

3rd Point. Consider—the Holy Sacrament is called the bread of the strong, because it is the recompense of those who are victorious over the enemies of salvation. The most holy sacrament is given to conquerors as a crown of life. It is the evangelic pearl, the precious stone on which is engraved the names of the predestinate; it is the morning preceding the day of eternity; the tree of life nourishing us to immortality; the throne of the Son of God, whence he invites sinners, promising those who courageously break their chains, that they shall sit at his side; the hidden manna that delights those souls who combat for the glory of their spouse; the source of true repose, by which we are established in immutable peace. Combat therefore generously against all temptations; be master of your senses; gain an empire over your passions, if you desire to taste the fruits of the divine sacrament. Meditate well the words of your Master: I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. To him that thirsteth I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that shall overcome, shall possess these things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. (*Apoc.* xxi. 6, 7.)

Grant, O my Jesus! to those who receive thee in the adorable Eucharist, an invincible courage in resisting temptation, an exact fidelity in corresponding with thy grace, and the plenitude of thy love in their hearts. Grant that in communicating we may establish in our souls the reign of thy sovereignty by submission, of thy bounty by confidence, and of thy grace by fidelity.

SUNDAY.

WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF CORPUS CHRISTI.

On a lively faith in the Blessed Eucharist.

1st Point. Consider—"Let us draw near with a true heart in the fulness of faith." (*Heb.* x. 22.) This virtue is most necessary to dispose the heart for participating in the plenitude of this divine mystery. It gives light to contemplate the Son of God, ardour to approach, and peace to enjoy him. In receiving the holy communion you should hold this sacred torch lighted in the midst of your soul, that you may incessantly fix the interior eye, not on the weak accidents that deceive our senses, but on the Son of God, the king of glory, who conceals the splendour of his countenance, that you may have access to his mercy, unawed by the greatness of his majesty. This spirit of faith should cause the heart to thrill with joy, and elicit acts of every virtue, in order to receive with greater reverence the divine guest who honours you with his presence; with hope, to approach him with gladness; humility, to annihilate yourself in profound respect; charity, to embrace him with love; devotion, to render him homage; obedience, to submit yourself to his divine will. Again, this spirit should concentrate all the powers of your soul in a profound recollection, and banish thence whatever could interrupt your conversation with your heavenly spouse. In silence and repose he communes familiarly with a faithful soul.

2nd Point. Consider—faith is most meritorious, because it subjects to Jesus Christ the noblest power of the soul, and opens to him the door of the heart, which is the throne of his love, and his most agreeable dwelling. The effort that captivates the spirit to the obedience of faith is heroic. The soul enlightened by

this virtue, is strictly united with its Saviour, notwithstanding the obscurity in which he is veiled. Moreover, by faith Jesus Christ reigns in the heart, and operates therein the effects of his love, so that it not only discovers, but also gives possession of this precious treasure. Faith is the key by which devout souls enter into the secrets of God, and enjoy the inestimable riches of his grace. Are they delighted in his goodness? It is faith assures them that all the treasures of his goodness are poured out in this sacrament. If in secret and familiar converse with him they anticipate, in some degree, celestial glory, faith is the principle of this blessed intercourse, and causes them to find a delicious repose under the shadow of this tree of life, whilst they taste of the sweetness of its fruits. Is their heart inflamed with love by an intimate union with the spouse of pure souls? It is faith discovers the beauty of his countenance, and makes them sensible of his divine attractions. In fine, if they say with the apostle, "I can do all things in him who strengtheneth me," it is by faith they understand that Jesus Christ, in whom they confide, is the arm of the eternal Father, to whom nothing is impossible.

3rd Point. Consider—with what fervour you should cultivate a spirit of faith, which produces such admirable effects. Ah! how many graces are lost, because of the weakness of your faith. Were you impressed with the sentiment that in the adorable Eucharist you receive the bread of angels, your Redeemer, he who dwelleth from eternity in the bosom of the Father, who descended on earth for the salvation of mankind, and who will again descend to judge the living and the dead; if you had a lively conviction of these truths, would you dare approach him as you do, without preparation, without sorrow, humility, or reverence? Would you presume, after having received the most holy sacrament, to employ the eyes that have contemplated Jesus Christ

in this adorable mystery, in the indulgence of curiosity; the tongue on which he has reposed, in slander, raillery, or expressions wounding to charity? Would you profane the heart into which he has entered, by inordinate affections, anger, hatred, or envy? Whence is it that you relapse so frequently into habitual failings, and draw so little fruit from the holy communion? It is that you approach with a faith weak and languid. Wherefore, when you participate in this celestial bread, enliven your faith to the end you may receive it with a reverence and devotion worthy your divine guest. Approach him, Christian soul, with this firm and lively faith; receive him by the real manducation of his body and blood; retain him by purity of heart; lose not his presence by levity or inconstancy. Above all, love this most amiable and loving Lord, who will himself be the crown of your obedience, and the recompense of your faith.

O Son of the living God! how glorious the crown thou hast prepared for those who renounce their own judgment, and triumph over the prudence of the flesh in the strength of thy word! I firmly believe it, because thou hast commanded my belief. Would that I could honour this divine mystery as the saints, whose lively faith seemed to dissipate the obscurity in which it is veiled.

MONDAY.

On Jesus in the Blessed Eucharist, as the model of self-abnegation.

1st Point. Consider—the Son of God in the adorable Eucharist, in a state of mystic death. He enters this holy sacrament, bearing with him all the merits of the cross, by a miraculous change of a lowly material

substance, into the priceless treasure of his sacred body and blood. If you desire that the spirit of Jesus replenish you with his virtue, to continue in and by you the work of redeeming charity, you must destroy all that nature has vitiated in your soul, that it may give place to the operations of grace. So long as you act from merely natural inclination, secret vanity, or self-love, all that you do is lost, you will never draw one soul to God. The salvation of souls is not the work of nature, it is that of Jesus Christ, whose divine spirit cannot enter a head in which self-love reigns. By self-abnegation alone you will find Jesus: in him your own perfection, and the salvation of your neighbour. Renew in your soul an ardent desire, and an efficacious will to reform the life hitherto so imperfect. What do you lose but a false liberty, a slavery? Shall not the love of Jesus operate in you what fire operates in material substances, despoiling them of grosser qualities, to convert them into pure flame? If you will, you may become a glowing fire, inflaming all hearts with divine charity.

2nd Point. Consider—that the sacred body of Jesus Christ is present in the holy Eucharist, in a manner all miraculous and spiritual. In this state he is the model on which should be formed the truly mortified man, whose senses and faculties must be perfectly spiritualized, and in whom must be destroyed that natural activity, so great an enemy to this mystic death. The mortified man should neither see, speak, treat with his neighbour, act, or take repose, but by the movement of Jesus Christ. As the power of death over the body is sovereign and universal, so mortification, which is the death of self-love, must leave nothing in us that lives according to nature. Examine yourself by this rule. Behold yourself in this mirror, and see whether Jesus alone lives in your thoughts, affections, words, and entire conduct. O how strong is nature still within you!

How sensible are you to vain honour! How eagerly you seek self ease and convenience! What an enemy to restraint, how attached to self-will and the gratification of sense! How should you labour during these days of devotion, to acquit yourself faithfully of a duty so important! What confusion, should you retrograde instead of advancing!

3rd Point. Consider—although Jesus Christ died but once on Calvary, nevertheless he daily renews that mystery on the altar. Therefore, Rupert calls the adorable sacrifice the sepulture of Jesus Christ, which the Church daily commemorates. During this holy octave, she celebrates the mystic death of her divine spouse with more than usual solemnity, and calls with particular earnestness on her children, to renew the fervor of the spirit, which is the death of nature. Not but that she requires at all seasons that they exercise a continual and universal mortification, for corrupt nature, which taints all that is within us, speedily revives even when we think it already destroyed. Wherefore be not satisfied with having entombed this domestic enemy, for without the practice of unremitting mortification, it will soon spring up again. It will immediately overthrow this exterior modesty and reserve, prevent you from exercising a holy indifference in the employment appointed by obedience, and cause you to resume all the maxims of false wisdom, which are so opposed to those of Jesus Christ. Watch vigilantly against the snares of this enemy, and resist with such fortitude, that all your actions may be those of a man truly mortified.

TUESDAY.

On Jesus in the Holy Eucharist, as a model of the Evangelic Spirit.

1st Point. Consider—the life of Jesus Christ in the most Holy Sacrament, is an interior and hidden life, although he dwells in the midst of creatures; it is a life most pure and holy, though exposed to the impiety of sinners; it is a life noble, excellent, and divine; there can be nothing more simple in the exterior, than the weak accidents under which it is concealed. Such should be your life, if you would live according to his spirit. When conversing with men, you should be as the ray of the sun, which, descending on earth, remains still attached to its source; you should hold yourself so united to God, as to draw all your strength from communicating with his Divine Majesty. Watch with unremitting vigilance over the purity of your soul, that while you draw others out of sin, you may not contract its stain. In fine, you should hold as certain that it is not the exterior splendour of natural talents, success, celebrity, or public admiration, that constitutes the principle of glory, or renders you great before God, but the hidden life of prayer, from which natural talents draw all their efficacy. The endowments of nature are to be valued, for when united to the interior spirit, they operate great effects; but without solid devotion, and union with Jesus Christ, all else is mere vanity, a nothing clothed with impotence, a deceitful appearance, which will be your destruction, as it has been that of many others. If St. Paul feared to become a reprobate whilst labouring for the salvation of others, what may you not fear, in whom the shadow of human qualifications only hides many shameful defects, and spiritual poverty?

2nd Point. Consider—the holy life of Jesus Christ in the blessed Eucharist, is directed by an infinite wisdom, that to human wisdom is inconceivable. This sacred life is an emanation of the eternal increated charity, and exhibits an exercise of the most heroic virtues, practised in a manner all divine. In imitation of this infinitely perfect model, your life also should be guided by a wisdom far exalted above that worldly prudence, which only displays itself in the pursuit of vain honour, research of the favour of creatures, and the transitory goods of this life. That wisdom which the spirit of Jesus communicates, values nothing but in reference to the glory of God, and the accomplishment of his divine will, esteeming only what regards his service, the perfection of our own soul, and the salvation of our neighbour. Your life should resemble the mystic life of Jesus Christ, by a filial love that acts neither from constraint nor human respect; that finds nothing difficult, and has no other bounds than the good pleasure of God, and the maxims of the Gospel. In fine, the virtues you practise should be solid, and discernable in their effects. If you examine your past life by these rules, how defective will it be found! What false lights in the mind, how cold and weak in charity, what little solidity in devotion and practice of virtue! You adore Jesus Christ in the morning as your master and guide, yet the actions of the day are not better regulated; you take him as your model, yet follow a path quite opposed to his example; you promise to overcome yourself, but on the first occasion yield to the impulse of nature; you beseech him to control your senses and inclinations, yet you indulge them without restraint.

3rd Point. Consider—the life of Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist is a continuous miracle. It is at once a state of glory and of humiliation. Although impassible, he exercises an unwearied patience amidst all the insults offered to him by ungrateful man. During

eighteen centuries he has dwelt with us in the tabernacle, yet he daily renews his sacramental life, on innumerable altars throughout the world. Such is the life of those who act by the Spirit of Jesus Christ. They know how to serve God in honour and in ignominy; to annihilate themselves amidst praise, to rise above opprobrium; undergo labour, without losing repose of spirit; never to relax or grow languid in their resolutions; daily to renovate their spirit; in fine, to die continually to themselves, and to persevere with inviolable fidelity in the service of God. How admirable the life of a man thus perfectly mortified! What a masterpiece of grace is a soul thus annihilated, thus devoid of self! Christian soul, enter into yourself, and you will find a subject of much humiliation. Your life is indeed full of prodigies, but how contrary to those of the mystic life of Jesus Christ. The world considers you a man of God, yet in your heart you are the slave of the world, of vanity, or human respect. You wear the robe of sanctity, and beneath it is concealed the imperfections of a worldling. You appear to labour for gaining souls to God, yet you seek only your own interest or glory. Beg of him, whose omnipotence is not limited by the humble form in which he presents himself in this sacrament of love, and whose charity for you has not as yet been extinguished by your ingratitude, to create a clean heart within you, or rather to purify, sanctify, and inflame, that which is now so sordid and earthly, in order that it may bear some resemblance, however faint, to the generous and devoted heart which is veiled under the sacramental species.

WEDNESDAY.

On Jesus as a model of zeal in the Holy Sacrament.

1st Point. Consider—the zeal for the salvation of souls which first drew Jesus Christ from the bosom of his eternal Father, still causes him daily to descend on the altar, that through him we may receive life by obedience and submission to the spirit he imparts. In the holy Sacrament he is the glowing and purifying coal of the prophet, the seed of divine life, and the seal of perfection, by which he engraves on our souls the image of his sanctity. Such should be the animating spirit of the ministers of his charity, whom Jesus Christ sends forth to invite all men to the heavenly banquet. They should prefer the salvation of souls to every personal consideration. All their talents, all their efforts, should be devoted only to draw souls to God, never seeking their own honour, reputation, or interest. If they converse with the world, let it be to lead many into the path of salvation. Were you now called to give an account of your stewardship, could you say that the talent of the divine word committed to your care, has produced the expected profit? Has no soul been lost through your indifference or neglect?

2nd Point. Consider—although the Son of God burns with the most ardent desire for the salvation of souls, yet he only exercises this zeal in a spirit of obedience, admirable in all its circumstances. He renders this obedience, not only to his heavenly Father, but for his sake, even to the least and vilest of men, if invested with the sacerdotal character. He renders it promptly, the moment the sacramental words are pronounced. He renders it perseveringly during eighteen centuries, and with such indifference and resignation, that having descended on the altar, he quits it not, until borne by the hand of the priest, though consumed

with zeal to enter our hearts, and impart to us the kiss of peace. Such ought to be the disposition of him who acts in the true spirit of Jesus Christ. Obedience should be the regulating principle of his zeal. He should receive from the hand of God and the lips of his superior whatever occupation they assign; his own choice would be fatal to himself, and render his labours unprofitable to his neighbour. He should be willing to spend his life in obscurity, whatever talent he may possess, for he has not more than Jesus Christ, ready to fly when and wherever obedience calls, with indefatigable courage. Is it thus your zeal is regulated? Are you without attachment, without pretension, indifferent to all that is required of you? When will you open your eyes to behold your duty? When will you close them to passion and human respect?

3rd Point. Consider—the love Jesus Christ bears to souls, is universal. He makes himself all to all, without distinction of noble or ignoble, of rich or poor, learned or unlearned. He is the consolation of the afflicted, the strength of the weak, the wisdom and light of the simple; even sinners, who are his enemies, are not rejected; and although they cannot receive him sacramentally while in that state, they can pray to him; he listens to them with mercy, and appeases the anger of his heavenly Father by the supplication he offers in their behalf. Such should be the zeal of evangelical labourers. They should regard the souls and not the condition of men. They should consider Jesus Christ alone in all those with whom they treat. They should not have less ardour in assisting the poor than the rich: or if there is any inclination, it should bear rather towards the most lowly, remembering that they ordinarily constitute the court of the heavenly King, visiting and attending assiduously round his altar, whilst the great ones of the world are removed far from him by their impiety or their pride. Here make serious

reflection on your past life. Examine the faults committed in those functions which regard your neighbour; endeavour to discover the evil, that you may cut it off to the root. Penetrated with sorrow and confusion for past disorders, reflect on the most efficacious means for correcting them, and renewing in yourself the spirit of Jesus Christ.

O my God and my Saviour, grant me thy grace, that in proportion as I approach more frequently thy august mysteries, I may also increase in true devotion and zeal.

THURSDAY.

OCTAVE OF CORPUS CHRISTI.

On the fruits of frequent Communion.

1st Point. Consider—"He hath set me in a place of pasture He hath brought me up on the water of refreshment; he hath converted my soul. He hath led me on the paths of justice, for his own name's sake." (*Ps.* xxii. 2, 3.) You will draw fruit from the divine Eucharist, if you restrain the tongue and retrench all its vices. Pure and holy should be the tongue, on which the Son of God is so often laid—the tongue so often purpled with his blood. The lips, which St. Chrysostom calls the door which Jesus Christ enters in the Holy Communion, should resound only with the praises of God. Holy and divine words alone should issue from the mouth, rendered more venerable and august by the participation of the sacred body of Jesus Christ, than the propitiatory of the temple, where God pronounced his oracles. Let those who utter words sounding to charity, words that proceed from vanity or self-complacency, reflect thereon with horror, remembering that the lips thus sullied and dishonoured, bear the seal of the Holy Ghost, who has sanctified them. Me-

ditate by whom you are surrounded, when receiving the holy communion: the cherubim and the seraphim, whose continual occupation is to bless and glorify God. How dare you, whose tongue pronounces so many words unbecoming and unworthy a servant of Jesus Christ, join in their canticle of praise?

2nd Point. Consider—you will have drawn fruit from the holy communion if you become more spiritual, more interior, more jealous of the purity of that heart which Jesus Christ so frequently honours with his divine presence. When God, says St. Chrysostom, enters the soul as his temple, he banishes thence all that is human and terrestrial, making it celestial, angelic, and divine. Such a soul thinks only on God, and speaks but of divine things, in the presence of such a guest. Jesus Christ has made himself our food, says St. Paulinus, *that walking in the strength of this bread*, we might say with the apostle, "our conversation is in heaven." If this mystery of love can change *the desert* of our exile *into a place of delight*, surely it should produce in our souls a resemblance with the inhabitants of the heavenly Jerusalem. Should we not live in the presence of the most holy sacrament, as the saints in that of the adorable Trinity? As Jesus Christ invites us to his heavenly table, we should also prepare for him a banquet of these *fruits that are sweet to his palate;* these are charity, peace, meekness, liberality, patience, joy in the Holy Ghost, and all other virtues, which are the effects of a worthy communion. If you cannot discover in your life any considerable trace of those virtues, let a fear of profaning this august sacrament serve to awaken your faith and animate your fervour; but let it not withdraw you from the table of the Lord. If there is danger in approaching too frequently, when we do not manifest the corresponding fruit, there is not less in being too long deprived of this life-giving bread.

3rd Point. Consider—you will manifest the fruit of a worthy communion in the mortification of the body, and vigilance in restraining all the senses. According to St. Gaudentius, the ordinance of the law, that the Paschal Lamb should be eaten with bitter lettuce, denotes that we cannot lead a pure life without mortifying the flesh. Abstinence from all the gratifications of sense seems bitter; but without this we cannot celebrate the Eucharistic festival. The body, in participating of the sacred communion, becomes the temple of the Holy Ghost, and a member of the mystic body of Jesus Christ; wherefore it should be preserved in great purity. The eyes that have beheld Jesus Christ in the holy Eucharist, should never be opened on vanities; the lips which he has entered, should never utter an idle word; they should only pronounce the praises of God, or words edifying to their neighbour. In fine, our Lord says, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and will make our abode with him." (*John*, vi. 14.) O how great is the reverence due to that body in which the Divinity resides! When the Son of God enters the sacramental species, the material bread is annihilated, and yields its place to the heavenly. Thus when Jesus Christ enters your heart, let self-love be annihilated in his presence, and abandon all the powers of soul and body to your sovereign Lord, to whom be honour and glory for all eternity. Amen.

FRIDAY.

Meditation for the Festival of the Sacred Heart.

1st Point. Consider—how admirably the Divine Wisdom, which *ordereth all things sweetly*, adapted the present devotion to the moral wants of these latter days. Seeing that the faith which formerly worshipped before the tabernacle with an angelic ardour, had become cold and languid, and that its first raptures of love were succeeded by indifference, irreverence, and treason; and beholding the majority of his ungrateful children deluded by a false show of generosity and affection, seeking once more to make the human heart their idol; our divine Lord Jesus Christ, in order to recall them to the only source of love, goodness, fidelity, and truth, upon earth, and to exhibit, by the contrast of its infinite perfections, the utter nothingness and falsehood of all creatures, graciously vouchsafed to reveal to us in those latter days, the ineffable charms of that Heart of hearts which burns continually with the love of man in the sacrament of the altar. How has your heart responded to that astonishing condescension of Jesus Christ? Recollect that the appeal which he made for a return of love, through the chosen servant to whom he made the revelation, was designed also for you, perhaps as a last resource to win back the affections, purify the inclinations, or rekindle the ardour of your cold and faithless heart. How have you profited by that most touching revelation? Do you place your principal delight in the sacrament of the altar? Do you display a generous zeal in making reparation to the sacred heart of Jesus, for the neglect and ingratitude of

Note.—The above meditation does not occur in the original, but the Translator has taken the liberty of adding it, for the purpose of completing the series on the Eucharist.

the majority of Christians, by the frequency and fervour of your visits? Does your demeanour in his presence testify the reverence and gratitude of an atoning heart? When opportunity presents itself, are you zealous in drawing the hearts of others to it? As you can possess neither grace nor merit, save when united with Jesus Christ, do you endeavour to pray, and work, and suffer, in union with his sacred heart? Ah! Lord, I acknowledge to my confusion the tepidity and sloth which have hitherto prevented me deriving from that inexhaustible source of grace, those powerful spiritual succours, so necessary both for myself and others, and which could be procured by perseverance in asking; but henceforth I am resolved with thy aid to have recourse constantly and earnestly to thy Sacred Heart as the fountain of life and sanctity, my defence in perils, my sweet retreat amid distracting cares, and my asylum in the hour of temptation and of suffering.

2nd Point. Consider—that if the devout remembrance of our Lord's passion be at all times one of the best dispositions for approaching the holy communion, it is peculiarly appropriate to the present solemnity, for on this day we commemorate the darkest sorrows of Gethsemani. The Calvary which is revealed to us on this occasion is not that of the Jews, but of the redeemed and the consecrated. The favourites whom he loved, the friends in whom he confided, the brethren whom he adopted, are here the executioners who crucify again the Son of God, and make a mockery of him. Of all the visions of horror and anguish which appalled and pierced the heart of Christ in his agony, this was the darkest; of all the ingredients of that chalice which caused his human nature to shudder and recoil, this was the bitterest. Is it wonderful when he beheld the sacrileges, profanations, irreverence, neglect, and abandonment which filled that chalice with the sorrows of hell, that he should implore his heavenly Father

if possible, to let it pass from him? "Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me." What ingredient did you contribute to that chalice? What at least has been your return for all the favours and graces either actually conferred or destined for you, in the sacrament of the Eucharist, had you been faithful in corresponding? Where is that overflowing of piety and gratitude, that exalted delicacy of sentiment, that profound awe, which marked your first approach to the holy communion? Count, if you can, all the favours which you have since received, through that beneficent heart. What has been your return?—vices eradicated, virtues acquired, affections purified? Alas! perhaps your conscience makes you the same reproach for your ingratitude to Jesus Christ, which the apostle did to the Corinthians, that he who loves you the most, is loved the least by you in return; perhaps a chilling indifference, an habitual infidelity, a daring irreverence, not to dwell on more painful recollections, have been hitherto the only proofs of your gratitude. Shall it be always so? At least, on this day, if you hear his voice, harden not your heart. No! thou true love of my soul, always infinitely amiable, and never so touchingly so as on this festival of love, I will not add to my former guilt by diffidence in thy mercy, but shall join with all the devotedness of my soul, in that public and general act of contrition, which thy faithful followers throughout the world are now offering to thee, firmly purposing to make my future life but a continuous act of reparation to thy deeply injured but ever merciful and compassionate Heart.

3rd POINT. Consider—that the best reparation you can make for the past, as well as the best proof of gratitude for the future, will consist in making the heart of Jesus the model by which to form and regulate your own. Contemplate that Heart in prayer, in action, and in suffering, and it will furnish you with a three-fold

rule for the direction of your life. It will teach you to go to prayer as you would to Calvary, in the spirit of oblation and sacrifice, and not with a view of obtaining consolations; to persevere in that sacred exercise despite of all obstacles; to combat and surmount not only the levity of the imagination, and the repugnance of the senses, but the more formidable assaults of fear and melancholy, and to expect from it, with an undoubted confidence, all the spiritual succours you stand in need of. In action, it will teach you to seek in all things the glory of your heavenly Father, and the good of your neighbour, to be beneficent, meek, and humble to all without exception, never to weary in the performance of good works, but to recollect the promise of Jesus Christ: "Whatsoever you do unto one of these your least brethren, you do unto him." In the hour of suffering it will teach you not to depend on the sympathy or assistance of creatures, but to place all your confidence in God, to bear the cross in silence and resignation, and to abandon soul and body without any reserve, into the hands of your merciful Redeemer. Endeavour then, at all times, and on all occasions, to keep yourself so united with Jesus Christ, that you may have no heart but his, that it may be the principle of all your sentiments and actions, and that you may be enabled to say with St. Paul: "I live now, not I, but Christ liveth in me." This will be a glorious reparation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus for past sins, and the best preventive of future infidelities.

SATURDAY.

AFTER THE OCTAVE OF CORPUS CHRISTI.

On Jesus demanding our Heart in return for that which he gives us in the Holy Sacrament.

1st Point. Consider—"My Son, give me thy heart." (*Prov.* xxiii. 26.) The heart alone can render a gift pleasing, and God will never accept our services if they are not tendered with a willing heart. This is the balance of the sanctuary in which are weighed all our offerings. He considers less the gift than the heart whence it proceeds, for he values nothing but that which springs from charity. Some offer their riches by dispensing them to the poor; some sacrifice their bodies by the rigours of austerity; but these are valueless unless accompanied by the offering of the heart, for God needs not our riches or mortifications, but he is jealous of the heart: "Thou hast wounded my heart my sister, my spouse; thou hast wounded my heart with one hair of thy head," (*Cant.* iv. 9,) that is, with one look of love coming from the heart. We can indeed refuse our heart; but we cannot do so without injustice; since, although it is free, it belongs to God, who has only given it, in order that we may sacrifice it to his love; so that we may say there is nothing more our own than our heart, if we consider the empire we possess over it; but also there is nothing more strictly due to God, if we consider the duty it owes to his sovereign dominion.

2nd Point. Consider—the Son of God demands our heart as a tribute, not only of love, but of justice. It belongs to him as the work of his hands, as the price of his blood, and as an inheritance that is his by a solemn donation. His eternal Father has given him the empire of all hearts; and we have chosen him as

our Lord and Master; the Father has sent him from heaven, and we have chosen him on earth for our Sovereign. We have consecrated ourselves inviolably to his service, renouncing in his favour the world, the flesh, and the devil. Our heart belongs to God as the work of his hands; and that no one may dispute its possession, he has impressed on it two signal marks, by which is recognised its almighty author. These are a capacity of enjoying God, and a resemblance to God. A boundless capacity that God alone can fill; a resemblance of infinite beauty which causes God to love it above all his works; our heart belongs also to God, as his most illustrious and dear-bought conquest. "You are no longer your own; you are bought with a great price," says the apostle. The Son of God has acquired the title of Redeemer at the inestimable price of his blood. The Father gave him for our ransom, nevertheless he was a voluntary victim: therefore the title of Redeemer is his inalienable right; our heart then being his conquest, he glories in its possession. The prophet calls him by excellence "the arrow of divine love;" with this arrow was St. Peter wounded when he said, "Lord, thou knowest that I love thee;" the same had entered the heart of St. Paul when he generously exclaimed, "What shall separate us from the love of Jesus Christ?" Can it not awaken a single pulse of love or gratitude in your cold and faithless heart?

3rd Point. Consider—the Son of God incessantly knocks at the door of our heart, yet all refuse him entrance. What does he seek in the desolate manger? What does he ask amid tears and sighs? To what end does he refer all his labours and journeys? What does he thirst for when expiring on Calvary? In fine, what does he desire in remaining with us in the most holy sacrament? Hearts that will love him—yet he finds them not! "My son, give me thy heart." What

demand more just on the part of the Son of God; what more advantageous to you? To whom will you give it, if you give it not to God? Is it to the world that deceives, to pleasures that sully, to the devil that seeks its destruction? Do you not blush to compare these with the Son of God? He asks your heart that he may save it: the world demands it only to inflict death. The Son of God would make it a paradise; the world a hell. Will you refuse it to him who is your only good?

My Lord and my God, my heart is thine inheritance, when wilt thou take absolute possession of it? Thou art in the heavens a resplendent sun, enlightening thy saints with the knowledge of thy beauty; thou art a glowing flame consuming them with thy love; thou art, in fine, their beatitude, their centre, and their sovereign good. But art thou not the master of my heart also? hast thou not a right to enter and take possession of it? Come, then, Lord, come, reign over my will, that it may have no other impulse but thy love. Sway my understanding, that it may know no other motive but thy truth; rule and regulate my memory that it may have no other recollection but thy benefits and mercy; and grant that the faculties which thou shalt have thus purified and sanctified upon earth, may be entirely absorbed in the enjoyment of thee for eternity.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

On Jesus resolving to manifest himself to the world.

1st Point. Consider—"And Jesus himself was beginning about the age of thirty years: being (as it was supposed) the Son of Joseph." (*Luke*, iii. 23.) Jesus having hitherto lived unknown to the world, resolves to manifest himself, and accomplish the work for which

he had descended from heaven. Meditate on this long silence, this hidden and humble life. Why does he remain so long concealed? why thus hidden among the people as a weak and ignorant man, He who is the virtue and the wisdom of God? Why is the King of Heaven called, and considered the son of an artizan? What has he to fear in discovering his greatness? Is it vain glory? He is the true glory of the eternal Father. Is it ambition and unjust usurpation of a title not his own? "The Word was God." (*John*, i.) "Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God." (*Phil.* ii. 6.) Ah! it is not for himself he fears, but for us. His example teaches that which he will afterwards publish by his precept. "Learn of me that I am meek and humble of heart." (*Matt.* ii. 29.) Should not the humility of Jesus confound our pride? We are ignorance itself, yet, filled with self-conceit, we seize every occasion of displaying our supposed knowledge; we rashly interfere and dictate to others; we are prompt to speak, and desirous to appear learned in all things.

2nd Point. Consider—Jesus having resolved to begin the preaching of the Gospel, communicates the design to his blessed Mother, under obedience to whose authority he had passed his life. He declares to her that the time is come, when he must quit her dwelling, to give himself to the *business of his Father*, and the salvation of man. He discovers to her the necessity and importance of this work, and gives her to understand the labours and persecutions he is to undergo. Behold the respect he bears his blessed Mother, and the resolution with which he deprives himself of her society, his only consolation on earth, to obey the will of his heavenly Father. What a censure on your conduct, who so often transgress the command of God, to satisfy your inclinations and attachment to creatures! Behold also the resignation of the Virgin Mother, and condole with

her on this separation. Learn from these examples, to begin every duty by communicating with Jesus and Mary, in order to obtain their benediction, whereon depends the success of your labours. Learn again to prefer the will of God to all you hold most dear, and to mourn for the absence of Jesus, and the loss you sustain when he quits you through your own fault. "When Jesus is present, all is sweet to the soul, and nothing seems difficult; when Jesus is absent, all is painful. When Jesus speaks not to the heart, there is no consolation; but when we hear the whisper of his voice, we are filled with joy. O blessed moment in which Jesus calls us from tears to joy! How hard and dry art thou without Jesus: how foolish and vain if thou desire any thing out of Jesus! Is not this a greater loss than if thou wert to lose the whole world?"

3rd POINT. Consider—Jesus, in order to commence the execution of his design by an act of humility and penance, in mingling with the crowd of penitents, goes to St. John, that he may receive baptism from the hand of his precursor. He that is to baptize the world in his blood, seeks a baptism of water, as if he were but an ordinary person. Who shall discover his divine origin under this profound humiliation? What need has he of baptism who is the source of sanctity? "He needs it not for himself but for us," says St. Maximus. He would thus institute the sacrament, and sanctify the waters of baptism. He would be baptized, says St. Ambrose, to excite us to penitence, and take from man every excuse, if he receive not the baptism of his master, since the master has not refused that of the servant. "He would be baptized," says St. Augustin, "to teach us, by his example, to humble ourselves, if we desire to be saved." Jesus in his circumcision assumes the appearance of a sinner, and in his baptism, that of a penitent. He is the Holy of Holies, yet he bears the resemblance of sin, and we who are sinners, desire to

appear saints. Learn hence that you must enter upon a spiritual life with humility and purity of heart, without which there is no solid virtue. According to St. Leo, "the victory of the Saviour over the devil and the world, was conceived and executed by humility." You can only gain the crown by following his example. Nothing is more weak than a proud man; he is prostrated by the least breath. Be humble, if you would be victorious over hell, impenetrable to all the shafts of your invisible enemies, and crowned with glory before God and man.

MONDAY.

On the Baptism of Jesus Christ.

1st Point. Consider—"Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to the Jordan, unto John, to be baptized by him. But John staid him, saying: I ought to be baptized by thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering, said to him: Suffer it to be so now For so it becometh us to fulfil all justice. Then he suffered him." (*Matt.* iii. 13.) St. John was baptizing and announcing the coming of Jesus Christ, whom he had seen but in the spirit, when the Son of God presented himself to be baptized. The Saint, enlightened by divine revelation, knew the Messiah. If before he could see him with corporal eyes, he "leaped for joy" at the presence of "the bridegroom," what emotion thrilled his soul, when his sovereign Lord, descending into the waters of Jordan, demanded baptism. With what profound and tender awe, did he lay his hand on the head of him whom angels adore! Trembling he exclaims: "I ought to be baptized by thee, and comest thou to me?" Such is the sentiment of a soul that knows God, and knows herself. The head that causes the powers to

tremble, and the principalities to adore, is bowed beneath the hand of John. Well may the holy precursor tremble! The soul that approaches to God, and treats with him without being abyssed in profound respect, knows neither God nor herself. Did you know whom you receive when approaching the Eucharistic table, with what sentiments of your own unworthiness would you say: "Wash me yet more and more from my iniquity. Have mercy on me according to thy great mercy." (*Ps.* 1.)

2nd POINT. Consider—Jesus encourages his awe-struck precursor, saying: "Suffer it to be so now;" and instructs us, that every humiliation which the accomplishment of the divine will demands, should be embraced with a generous devotedness. "For so it becometh us to fulfil all justice." This grand maxim should be the impelling principle of a soul that aspires to perfection. Those who by duty are called to instruct others, should "fulfil all justice;" that is, practise all virtues, and exercise works of piety in a spirit of humility, purity, and compunction: thus should you commence and accomplish every action. Humility so practised, is consummate justice. The first degree of humility is to submit to superiors, and not prefer yourself to equals; the second to submit to equals, and not prefer yourself to inferiors; the third, to place yourself beneath inferiors, in which consists the plenitude of justice, which Jesus Christ has practised. In effect, he in whom the plenitude of the divinity resides, must be in all things the model of perfection. He came not to destroy, but to perfect the law. The perfection and plenitude of justice are to submit to an inferior. In abasing himself beneath the hand of a servant, Jesus Christ has *fulfilled all justice.* Behold your model; examine in what you resemble him.

3rd POINT. Consider—"And Jesus being baptized, forthwith came out of the water" (*Matt.* iii. 16.) He

re-ascended the bank of the river, teaching us that he who has been baptized should labour to ascend the highest degree of virtue, as by baptism he is elevated to the highest dignity, being made the child of God, and heir of his heavenly kingdom. "Jesus also being baptized and praying, heaven was opened." (*Luke.* iii. 21) Although heaven is opened by the sacrament of baptism, we must not live idly, but give ourselves to fasting, prayer, and works of mercy; for although sin is remitted, the frailty of the flesh remains. We must therefore have recourse to the all-efficacious remedy of prayer. Prayer is the key of heaven. Jesus Christ prays, and the Holy Ghost descends. Jesus Christ prays and humbles himself, and the voice of the eternal Father is heard from heaven, saying: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (*Matt.* iii. 17.) God is jealous of the innocence and sanctity of his divine Son, and also of the same virtues in his faithful servants, when they annihilate themselves in his service. To the humble prayer of Jesus we owe our sanctification on earth, and our glory in heaven. To his baptism you are indebted for the graces received in your own. First, that of adoption, which made you a child of God, and the object of divine complacency. Second, the gifts of the Holy Ghost, which enable you to lead a life conformable to the dignity of children of God. Finally, a right to the kingdom of heaven, the inheritance of the saints. Co-operate with these graces by sanctity of life; and let your only care be to please God in all things, that of you also he may say: "This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased."

TUESDAY.

On the retreat of Jesus in the desert.

1st Point. Consider—"And immediately the spirit drove him out into the desert." (*Mark*, i. 13.) Jesus withdraws immediately after having received the glorious testimony which heaven had rendered to his sanctity and merit. He flies to avoid the applause of the people. Would it not redound to the divine glory that he should be known as the Son of God? Without doubt: but he would first leave this example of modesty. He flies the honour which is his due; and you seek the glory and praise which you merit not: "Jesus was led by the spirit into the desert." (*Matt.* iv. 1.) Under the conduct of this heavenly Master you should also walk with fervour; for he is an enemy to all langour and tepidity. When he replenishes the soul with his divine presence, he always excites it to labour ardently. If you are not animated by the spirit of fervour, it is a mark that the Holy Ghost has not filled your soul. Beware lest the impetuous movements of corrupt nature prevent the operations of his grace within you. Observe that it is after extraordinary favours the Holy Ghost leads Jesus into solitude; on the contrary, when favoured with his visit, your heart expands with a false joy and most fatal security, that serves only to deceive. Heavenly consolation is soon lost by the soul that loves not silence and recollection.

2nd Point. Consider—Jesus withdraws into the desert, to treat with his Eternal Father about the great work for which he had descended on earth. He retires to sanctify, and lay the foundation of a solitary and contemplative life; to establish fasting and penance in his Church, and in fine to teach evangelic labourers what they must do to promote the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Why does the Increated Wisdom, who

beholds in one view the past, present, and future, thus prepare in solitude for the execution of his design? It is for my instruction; to teach me to think more seriously than I have hitherto done, on my eternal salvation. Weak and blind that I am, the all-decisive moment of eternity draws near, and I prepare not for its approach. My Saviour esteems it so important; and I heedlessly neglect my own and only good. Years seem short to him for meditating this great object, and to me moments employed therein seem tedious. O eternity, how important are thy consequences; should not their duration deeply touch my heart, when I behold this subject continually occupy the thoughts of Jesus Christ!

3rd Point. Consider—Jesus Christ in the desert offering for you a sacrifice of penance. By sin you had been banished from heaven, and to deliver you from so fatal an exile, he deprives himself of human society. Sin had rendered you all earthly; and to restore your spiritual life, he becomes the companion of savage beasts. By sin you were made the slave of the devil; and to regain your liberty, he suffers the insults of the infernal enemy, whom he combats, that you may gather the fruit of his victory. Give thanks to your merciful Saviour, and be confounded that you do so little to expiate your sins, and subject the flesh to the spirit. Learn to follow the spirit of God into the desert; that is, to listen to the inspirations that lead to recollection, that you may join recollection with action, in labouring for the salvation of your neighbour. Learn also to fly worldly conversation, to retrench unprofitable discourse, to withdraw from dissipating society, and appear in public only for the glory of God, and the instruction of the people. It is difficult to converse with the world, without contracting its vices, to which nature inclines more strongly than to virtue. Those charged with the care of souls are obliged frequently to treat with God,

and to meditate in his presence what they are to declare on his part. Moreover, they are obliged to spread around the odour of their virtue, which alone can give influence to their words. They are to converse with the world only when charity requires, and God calls them thereto, saying, "Arise, make haste, my love, my dove, my beautiful one, come." (*Cant.* ii. 10.) He calls her beloved, says St. Bernard, because of her zeal for his glory. He calls her dove, on account of the sighs and tears poured forth in solitude. He calls her beautiful, from the lights she receives in contemplation. Such are the qualities of a perfect evangelic labourer, to be united with God, to watch over himself, "to spend and be spent" in the service of his neighbour.

WEDNESDAY.

On the temptation of Jesus in the desert.

1st POINT. Consider—"And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterwards he was hungry." (*Matt.* iv. 2.) The evil spirit had hitherto maliciously observed the Son of God, and seizes on the present as a favourable occasion insolently to attack him. The Son of God permits the spirit of darkness to spread his snares, in order that you may be on your guard, and provide for your defence. You have an enemy that sleeps not, and continually seeks your destruction. He watches the inclinations of your heart, to discover what passion predominates therein, that he may surprise you in the weak point. Watch as vigilantly for your safety, as he does for your ruin. Distrust his artifices. Fear his violence. To vanquish him you must despise both his threats and promises, because he cannot overcome you without your own consent. You should found your contempt of the evil one, on the grace and suc-

cours of heaven: but you must also fear the weakness of your own heart. In fine, this enemy is indefatigable; if neither wile nor force can vanquish, he wearies by importunity often worse than violence. Should you not have recourse to prayer, and implore the divine assistance, without which you cannot resist the least temptation. Say then with the prophet—"How long shall my enemy be exalted over me? Consider and hear me, O Lord my God. Enlighten my eyes that I may never sleep in death: lest at any time my enemy say: I have prevailed over him." (*Ps.* xii.)

2nd Point. Consider—"And the tempter coming, said to him: if thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." (*Matt.* iv. 3.) The wily enemy tempts our divine Lord with gluttony, under pretence of the necessity he endures. "When he had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterwards he was hungry." (*Matt.* iv. 2.) How often has he vanquished you by the same artifice? How often have you yielded to sensuality on the plea of necessity, or of conforming to others? The tempter says, "If thou be the Son of God," because his design is to discover if he be truly such. When assailed by temptation, have you not failed in the courage and fidelity which ought to characterise the children of God? Prove, henceforth, by resistance to every evil suggestion, that you degenerate not from that high dignity. "Then the devil took him up into the holy city, and set him upon the pinnacle of the temple, and said to him: If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down, for it is written: *That he hath given his angels charge over thee.*" (*Matt.* iv. 5, 6.) Thus has he oftentimes deceived you into dangerous occasions, presuming that no evil would result. Under pretext of piety has he not engaged you rashly to undertake that which exceeds your strength? How often, under pretence of prudence, has he not whispered: "Cast yourself down;" that is, moderate your indiscreet fer-

vour: preserve health, lest you become useless to others. You, indeed, require direction; but listen not to your enemy; consult your superior, through whose lips you will hear the voice of the Holy Ghost. "Again, the devil took him up into a very high mountain, and hewed him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them. And said to him: All these will I ive thee, if falling down thou wilt adore me." (*Matt.* iv. 8, 9.) Did Satan possess the entire world, gladly would he give it to draw you into a single sin; yet, blind that you are, you commit them without number for a phantom, a nothing!

3rd POINT. Consider—"And all the temptation being ended, the devil departed from him for a time." (*Luke*, iv. 13.) From the example of the Son of God you learn how to vanquish your enemy. He prevents not the temptation, because the evil consists neither in the attacks of the enemy, nor the rebellion of corrupt nature. He rejects the tempter promptly; he deliberates not, but repels him with horror, opposing to his assaults the eternal truths, and the word of God. Is it with such resolution and firmness you resist? Do you defend yourself on supernatural motives? "It is written: *The Lord thy God thou shalt adore.*" (*Matt.* iv. 10.) Make this your shield: God has forbidden it; my rule permits it not; it is contrary to the Gospel and the spirit of Jesus Christ: these should be your reflections; these should suffice to confirm you in your duty.

Then the devil left him: and behold angels came and ministered to him." (*Matt.* iv. 11.) You must never lay down your arms until the enemy is vanquished. Even when he withdraws, you must remain on your guard: he retires only "for a time." Let the fruit of the victory encourage you. "And behold angels came and ministered to him." Despise the pleasures of sense, and you shall possess celestial glory. Resist the devil, and he will fly from you. Happy he that can say with

Jesus: "For the prince of this world cometh, and in me he hath not anything." (*John*, xiv. 30.) Watch without ceasing: fly occasions, curb your passions, and he can never gain an advantage over you.

THURSDAY.

St. John saying to the people: Behold the Lamb of God.

1st Point. Consider—the eternal Father has chosen St. John to publish the coming of his divine Son. With what fervour does he fulfil this office. His heart, his voice, his hand, all are devoted to glorify the Lamb. He is a fire to inflame all hearts with the love of his Master, a light to enlighten all with a knowledge of his greatness: whilst his voice announces, his hand points out the Messiah. "Behold the Lamb of God." (*John*, i. 19.) The Lamb by excellence, because of his innocence, his meekness, patience, silence, and obedience. The Lamb of God, for all his virtues proceed from, and lead us to God. The Lamb by excellence, because the paschal lamb, and all other victims of the ancient testament, were but types of him. The Lamb of God, because he is his own divine Son, who has offered himself as an atoning victim to the justice of the eternal Father. In fine, the Lamb by excellence, because his merits are priceless and superabundant for the expiation of the sins of the world. The Lamb of God, because, by an excess of love, he has given him for our redemption, through his blood, and that we might thence draw, as from an inexhaustible source, the remedy of all our evils, and the plenitude of every grace. All this St. John saw in spirit, when he beheld Jesus present, and his heart bounded with joy. Are you sensible of this same consolation when he approaches you under the sacramental veil? With what sentiments of joy,

love, and respect, should you hear these words pronounced by the priest: "Behold the Lamb of God! behold him who taketh away the sins of the world!"

2nd POINT. Consider—"The next day again John stood, and two of his disciples; and beholding Jesus walking, he saith: Behold the Lamb of God. And the two disciples heard him speak, and they follow Jesus." (*John*, i.) The two disciples, touched with the desire of knowing the Messiah, quit their master to follow the Lamb who walked before them. They were not impelled by a vain curiosity, but drawn by the influence of the Holy Ghost, by whom they were inspired with a desire of obtaining a more intimate knowledge of the Son of God, and of becoming his disciples. They require not long discourse: these three words, "Behold the Lamb of God." suffice to gain their hearts. The incomparable meekness of this divine Lamb, as a powerful charm, draws them after him, even to the cross.

Beloved Son of the living God! inexhaustible source of grace, of whom we all receive! draw me also after thee, by hope and love. Most amiable Jesus, incline my heart, that it may always tend towards thee, my first beginning and my last end. Thou alone canst fill this heart, which was made only for thee; and thou alone art good and sweet to those who seek thee with devoted love.

3rd POINT. Consider—"And Jesus turning, and seeing them following him, saith to them: What seek you? Who said to him: Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou? He saith to them: Come and see." (*John*, i. 38, 39.) Were Jesus to ask you: "What seek you?" could you reply, that you seek him alone? Our blessed Lord, who ardently wishes your salvation, would have you frequently inquire *where he dwells;* that is, to contemplate the heavenly city, and conceive generous desires of its possession. Such desires are calculated to inspire

great contempt of all terrestrial objects; for, according to Rupert, all creatures seem inconsiderable to him who contemplates the dwelling-place of their Creator. The disciples are overjoyed at the condescension of the Son of God: "They came, and saw where he abode, and they staid with him that day; now it was about the tenth hour." (*John*, i. 39.) In that day, says St. Chrysostom, he not only replenished them with lights for their own sanctification, but qualified them to draw many others to his knowledge and love. Happy are the disciples who follow Jesus Christ in the narrow path of humility, patience, mortification and charity! These shall see where he dwells, and shall dwell with him during the blessed day of eternity. "Come and see." Delay not. Enter the stable of Bethlehem. Ascend the hill of Calvary, and behold what he there suffers for your salvation. Approach the most holy sacrament, where his love is as a "consuming fire." At the hour of death, how consoling to hear these words: "Come and see!" Examine your heart, and see whether it be sufficiently pure to become his dwelling-place.

Come thyself, O divine Lamb, and purify it in thy precious blood.

FRIDAY.

On Andrew bringing Simon to Jesus.

1st Point. Consider—"And Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was one of the two who heard of John, and followed him. He findeth first his brother Simon, and saith to him: We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ." (*John*, i. 40, 41.) St. Andrew, says Cardinal Peter Damian, is the herald of an intelligence the most glorious and important; for

he proclaims that he has found him, who from the beginning, the holy patriarchs had so ardently expected and desired to behold. How great his happiness who finds Jesus! and in him finds all things. "He that has found Jesus, has discovered a precious treasure; or rather a good above all goods." (*Imitat.* b. ii., c. 8.) A good in which is centred all the riches, glory, and delight of the saints. He is the sovereign good, says St. Augustine, the chaste delight of pure souls, who can say, with St. Jerome: All the good that I possess is but a little foretaste of God: the more I drink, the more my thirst is augmented. How few they are that penetrate this truth, how few that reduce it to practice! For the possession of Jesus Christ, in whom are contained all the treasures of heaven, we make a difficulty of renouncing a vain pleasure, a trifling interest, an inordinate affection. Strange blindness! We count it nothing to gain Jesus Christ, and nevertheless, every sacrifice should be esteemed as nothing for attaining this sovereign good.

2nd Point. Consider—"And he brought him to Jesus." No sooner has St. Andrew found the treasure, than he discovers it to others. He immediately teaches that which he has learned, and imparts that which he has received. He holds not long discourse with his brother; he leads him at once to the source of grace. Admire the zeal of this new disciple in diffusing the knowledge of his master. He has truly found Christ, who burns with his love, and with the desire of the salvation of his brethren. He has not yet found the Son of God, who has no zeal for the conversion of his neighbour. Fire produces fire: one lighted flambeau lights many others; and he who has found Jesus, has nothing more at heart, than to manifest him to the entire world, were it in his power. The ring touched by the loadstone has power to draw others; and he whose heart Jesus Christ has touched, receives a secret virtue to draw others. St. Andrew drew his brother;

St. Philip drew Nathaniel. How many have you drawn? Fear, lest as yet you have not found Jesus Christ; since you have so little zeal to see him known and served.

3rd Point. Consider—"And Jesus looking upon him said: Thou art Simon the son of Jona; thou shalt be called Cephas, which is interpreted Peter." (*John*, i. 42.) St. Peter ardently desires to behold the Messiah, and promptly follows the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. As soon as he understands that the Christ has appeared, he goes diligently to consecrate himself to his service. Follow without delay the movements of grace. Suffer yourself to be led to Jesus Christ by the inspirations he sends. Listen to the counsel he imparts through your directors and superiors. Resist not the exhortations of those who announce to you his will. "Thou shalt be called Cephas." Our Lord thrice announces in the Gospel the imposition of this name, to impress us with the respect due to the head of the Church. Behold the effect of that benign glance which converts sinners, sanctifies penitents, glorifies the just, and which constitutes eternal beatitude. The supreme head of the Church chooses the fundamental stones of his edifice. The Father of the family sends labourers into his vineyard, and dispenses to each his office. Be contented with that which he has appointed you, and be persuaded it is the most advantageous. Envy not those who are preferred before you. St. Andrew was not jealous of the happiness of his brother, and although older than St. Peter, he is not displeased to be postponed to him whom he had led to Christ Envy not therefore your brethren; be satisfied that God beholds and has given you a place in his house; although it were the lowest, esteem yourself honoured; whatever rank you hold in the house of God, it is always far above your merits. "Blessed are they who dwell in thy house, O Lord, they shall praise thee for ever and ever." (*Ps.* lxxxiii.)

SATURDAY.

On the calling of Philip and Nathaniel.

1st Point. Consider—"On the following day he would go forth into Galilee, and he findeth Philip. And Jesus saith to him: Follow me." (*John*, i. 43.) Happy disciple, called to the society of Jesus Christ! What account do you make of a similar vocation? Reflect on the sweetness and strength of that call which attracted you to his service. How have you corresponded with so singular a favour? "Follow me." Engrave these words on your heart; they will inspire you with strength and courage to resist every natural repugnance, when you undertake anything difficult, for the glory of God. "Follow me." St. Ireneus says, to follow the Saviour is to partake of the fruit of salvation, as to follow the light is to participate in its brightness. "Follow me." Jesus Christ speaks: he who has suffered death, to obtain for you the graces necessary to follow him; that is, to imitate his life. The fruit of this imitation he promises in these words: "Where I am, there also shall my minister be." (*John*, xii. 6.) "Follow me." The Eternal Father commands you to follow his divine Son. Jesus Christ walks before, that you may follow. He is the commencement and the end of the ways of God. Follow, therefore, this guide. If you fast, he has fasted before you; if you suffer for the glory of his name, he has first suffered for your redemption. He says: *I am the way.* There is no other. *I am the truth.* All other ways are false. *I am the life.* All other ways lead to death.

2nd Point. Consider "Philip findeth Nathaniel, and saith to him: We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the Prophets did write, Jesus the Son of Joseph of Nazareth. And Nathaniel saith to him:

Can any thing of good come from Nazareth? Philip saith to him: Come and see." (*John*, i. 45.) Learn from the zeal of St. Philip the qualities that should characterize your own His zeal is ardent. He has no sooner received the grace of his vocation, than he burns to communicate it to others. If you love Jesus Christ, like this fervent disciple, you will desire to draw all to the service of this amiable Saviour. The zeal of St. Philip is wise and prudent. He contends not with Nathaniel, he desires him to judge for himself, saying: "Come and see." His zeal is meek; he is not importunate; he is content with saying: "Come and see," knowing that the sight of Jesus will suffice to gain his heart. You are, perhaps, repelled by a vain apprehension of the difficulties to be encountered in the practice of virtue. "Come and see." Experience will convince you that the *yoke* of Jesus Christ *is sweet* and his *burden light*. Then will you exclaim in admiration, "How good is God to Israel, to them that are of a right heart! But my feet were almost moved; my steps had well nigh slipt. But it is good for me to adhere to my God, to put my hope in the Lord God." (*Ps.* xcii.)

3rd Point. Consider—"Jesus saw Nathaniel coming to him, and he saith of him: Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile." (*John*, i. 47.) Could he say of you: behold a servant of God, not in appearance only, but in truth? How agreeable in the eyes of the divine Majesty are the simplicity and sincerity of a virtuous man. "Nathaniel saith to him: Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said to him: Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee. Nathaniel answered him and said: Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the king of Israel." (*John*, i. 48, 49.) Do you reflect, there is an eye that beholds all things? How terrible is this thought to the sinner! how sweet to the just! "Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig-tree,

thou believest." Learn how important to correspond with preventing grace, which increases in proportion to your fidelity. Say with Nathaniel: "Master, thou art the Son of God, thou art the king of Israel."

O Lord, let thy grace awaken the torpor of my will, that producing more ardently the fruit of holy actions, I may receive from thy clemency the remedy of all my spiritual evils.

FOURTH SUNDAY.

On the Marriage Feast of Cana in Galilee.

1st Point. Consider—"And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee: and the Mother of Jesus was there. And Jesus also was invited, and his disciples, to the marriage." (*John*, ii.) Jesus and Mary are invited as guests to the marriage feast. We also are invited to the nuptial feast of the Lamb. But to sit at his table we must be clothed with grace, and ornamented with charity. "You are my friends, if you do the things that I command you." (*John*, xv. 14.) "If any one love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and will make our abode with him." (*John*, xiv. 23.) The union of the Divine Word with human nature has formed so strict an alliance between God and man, that we truly constitute his family, dwelling in his house, and eating at his holy table. The real and intimate presence of Jesus Christ in the holy Eucharist, renders him so personally present to us, that we may justly say: "Neither is there any other nation so great, that hath God so nigh them, as our God is present to all our petitions." (*Deut.* iv. 7.) This consideration should animate us to approach with joy to the table of the Lord: "Run with diligence to this extraordinary ban-

quet, where God is seated with man; the Eternal Word with sinners, and the Incarnate Wisdom with the simple and unlearned." The presence of this divine Lord should also hold us in profound respect. For as Solomon says: "The king, that sitteth on the throne of judgment, scattereth away all evil with his look." (*Prov.* xx. 8.) When therefore you communicate, place Jesus Christ in your heart as on a throne, consider him as your king, prescribing laws to all the powers of your soul and body, reproving your vices and evil inclinations, and recompensing your virtues.

2nd Point. Consider—"And the wine failing, the mother of Jesus saith to him: They have no wine." (*John*, ii. 3.) We also frequently experience an indigence which should humble and confound us. The wine of human consolation often fails by a secret permission of Providence, in order to detach us from creatures. This indigence proceeds from the finite nature of created objects, which are necessarily as limited in the gratification they confer as in the duration of that indulgence. Happy he that preserves his heart free from all inordinate affections, or promptly breaks those bonds in order to place all his confidence in God, and take for his support the power of the Omnipotent. The wine of sensible devotion is liable to fail, but this poverty, though more humiliating than the former, should not disturb us, because it is sometimes more profitable than the enjoyment of interior sweetness. In the ordinary dispensations of divine goodness, sensible consolation is withdrawn, only that we may seek the grace of solid devotion, which consists in a will to follow promptly the movement of the divine spirit, and an entire devotedness to the service of God. In fine, the wine of real virtue frequently fails. This is evinced in the want of humility, patience, charity, mortification fidelity to grace and to the practices essential to the attainment of perfection. This indigence we should

bewail bitterly, and labour with all possible diligence to expiate and repair the injury it inflicts, lest, at the hour of death, we should be found stript of grace, and deprived of that glory which is the eternal recompense of virtues and good works.

3rd Point. Consider—"The Mother of Jesus saith to him: They have no wine." Jesus Christ would honour his blessed Mother, by operating, at her intercession, his first miracle. He would also thus strengthen the faith of his disciples: for the miracles wrought by the Son of God during his life were visible proofs of his divinity, and the zeal with which the eternal Father marked his mission. "For the works which my Father hath given me to perfect: the works themselves, which I do, give testimony of me, that the Father hath sent me." (*John*, v. 36.) Pious souls who approach the heavenly banquet of the Eucharist, which is the nuptial feast of the Lamb, in a state of coldness and aridity, should remark, that as the wine failed at the marriage feast of Cana, so sensible devotion is sometimes withdrawn at the Eucharistic table, because Jesus Christ, the spouse, permits it to fail; in order to unite us immediately to himself by a naked faith and pure love, that depends not on this interior sweetness. Let them not complain of this sterility of mind, or insensibility of heart, but submissive to the appointments of divine Providence, let them humble themselves under the hand of God, and suffer themselves to be conducted in all things by his divine wisdom. For "they that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Sion: he shall not be moved for ever that dwelleth in Jerusalem. Mountains are round about it: so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth, now and for ever." (Ps. cxxiv.)

MONDAY.

On the Marriage Feast, continued.

1st Point. Consider—"And Jesus saith to her: Woman, what is it to me and to thee? my hour is not yet come." (*John*, ii. 4.) The Incarnate Word does nothing which has not been pre-ordained in the eternal council. The heavenly Father predisposes all things according to his infinite wisdom, and his divine Son accomplishes each at the time appointed. His hours and moments are marked by his Providence, and regulated with an admirable justice. To the intercession of his blessed Mother alone appertains the privilege of anticipating the time predestined for his miracles and mercies. To us it belongs to expect them with patience, to receive them with reverence, and co-operate with them faithfully; but not to prevent them by precipitation or impetuosity of mind. It belongs not to us to fathom the moments of which God has reserved the knowledge to himself, much less to dispose of, to advance, or retard the secret ways of Providence. "It is not for you to know the times or the moments which the Father has put in his own power," (*Acts*, i. 7,) said the Son of God to his disciples, who desired to know, whether at that time he would establish the kingdom of Israel. Let it be sufficient for you to prepare for the coming of the Holy Ghost, when it shall please the Father to send him. Abandon yourself therefore, unreservedly, to the guidance of divine Providence. Desire not to enter into the secret judgments of God, or to penetrate future events. All that you should ask of the Father of mercies is, that preventing and accompanying grace in every duty, that will enable you to apply continually to the exercise of those good works which he will inspire.

2nd Point. Consider—the times and moments of divine Providence differ in our regard, as the hours of

the day, which though equally regulated in their tenor, are nevertheless varied in their occurrences. "There is a time of war and a time of peace, a time to die and a time to live." (*Eccles.* iii.) A time of humiliation, and a time of glory; moments of darkness, dereliction, and the cross, and moments of light, of enjoyment, and repose. "The heart of a wise man understandeth time and answer. There is a time and opportunity for every business" (*Eccles.* viii.) You should neither fear nor shun the moments that seem painful or tedious, nor desire or anticipate those that appear under a more favourable aspect; but love them equally, receive them with holy indifference, follow them with simplicity, saying, with the Son of God: "Father, the hour is come," (*John*, xvii. 1,) wherein I am to suffer for thy glory; "the hour is come," wherein thou impartest to me thy joy. I give thee thanks equally for one as the other: it sufficeth me to know that both are thine, for to render them also mine, and make them the rule of my life.

3rd POINT. Consider—when the Son of God engages you in occasions of suffering, or places you in some humbling and painful occupation, receive not this seemingly adverse dispensation of his Providence as a mark of anger or indignation. He has observed this same apparently rigorous conduct towards his blessed Mother, to give her occasion of exercising the most heroic acts of virtue. He himself was thus treated on the mount of Olives, and on the cross, although he was the well-beloved of the eternal Father, and the object of his divine complacency; nevertheless he writhed under the severity of that hand, when agonized with sorrow he exclaimed: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me." (*Matt* xxix. 46.) Wherefore the disciples of this divine Master and of his immaculate Mother, should not be depressed with sorrow, if sometimes they experience on the part of God, a cold silence, a repelling severity, or the keen reproach he whispers interiorly in their

conscience. On the contrary, they should, in imitation of their heavenly model, and their most holy patroness. sustain such trials with humility, patience, meekness, and confidence in him who thus exercises their virtue. If it happen that he seem deaf to their prayers, and coldly rejects their petitions, let them not say as did those of Capharnaum: "This saying is hard, and who can hear it? (*John*, vi. 61.) But rather with St. Peter: "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." (*John*, vi. 69.)

TUESDAY.

On the Marriage Feast, continued.

1st Point. Consider—"His mother saith to the waiters: Whatsoever he shall say to you, do ye." (*John*, ii. 5.) In order perfectly to gain the heart of the Blessed Virgin, you must be obedient to her divine Son, according to her salutary counsel: "Whatsoever he shall say to you, do ye." Reflect on this mystery. The Son of God entered into the world to obey, and accomplish the will of his heavenly Father; also to command in your heart, and establish therein the kingdom of God. You must obey with him, if you would reign with him. Happy servitude, which makes you truly free! Glorious servitude, which acquires you a name above all created names! For in proportion as you participate in the obedience of Jesus Christ, you shall also participate in his glory. Say, with St. Paul: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (*Acts*, ix. 6.) Or with David: "Teach me to do thy will, because thou art my God." (*Ps.* cxlii. 10.)

2nd Point. Consider—"Jesus saith to them: Draw out now, and carry to the chief steward of the feast." (*John*, ii. 8.) Jesus again repeats the miracle wrought

at the marriage feast, in your heart, when he changes the tears of servile fear into those of filial and penitent love. Heretofore you served God in sorrow, now you serve him with joy. Behold the water changed into a new wine—the delicious wine of charity, that rejoiceth the heart of man, imparting fortitude that sustains the spirit against all the weakness of nature; and so inebriates the soul, that forgetful of all things else, she thinks only on God, who fills all her powers with the sweetness of heavenly consolation. For, according to St. Bernard, the soul that is once inebriated with divine love, receives suffering with joy. It feels no sorrow, faints not under labour, and rises superior to contempt, or ignominy. Jesus Christ alone can effect this miraculous change from sin to grace, from tepidity to fervour, from life to death. One glance of his eye, one movement of his grace, suffices to complete a conversion so miraculous, which, without his aid, no human industry could accomplish. It is good to await in silence the succour of the Most High. If he defers his visit for a time, expect it still with patience. For at length he will come and console you, as he is wont to his faithful servants, saying: Draw now, and carry to your brethren; for your vesels are filled even to overflowing The plenitude of graces I have poured therein, is so abundant, that without prejudice to yourself, you can dispense its benefits to others.

3rd Point. Consider—Jesus Christ performs daily another miracle, by changing wine into his own most precious blood. The same is wrought when, through the efficacy of divine love, your soul lives truly the life of Jesus Christ. For as the corporal life of the Son of God is in his sacred blood, so the spiritual and eternal life of your soul is in this same precious blood. "He that drinketh my blood, abideth in me." (*John*, vi. 57.) No wonder, then, that the sacred blood of Jesus Christ should be the principle of your life, since you have the

honour to be one of his members. How precious the life that is drawn from such a source! How precious that blood which imparts the life of grace and of glory! Heretofore, God had forbidden to drink the blood of animals, because life is in the blood; now, on the contrary, he commands you to drink the blood of his divine Son, but he forbids you to shed it. You shed the blood of Jesus Christ if you separate yourself from his mystic body, or separate others from it by mortal sin.

Spirit of God, through whom we are united by love to Jesus Christ, as the members of the body to their head, never suffer me to break the sweet bond of grace, by which I participate in the blood of the Lamb, and live by his spirit. Grant that my life may be a continuation of his; that is, a life holy, pure, and innocent, so that I may say—"I live now, not I: but Christ liveth in me." (*Gal.* ii. 20.)

WEDNESDAY.

On the Marriage Feast, concluded.

1st Point. Consider—"And when the chief steward had tasted the water made wine, and knew not whence it was, but the waiters knew, who had drawn the water; the steward calleth the bridegroom, and saith to him: Every man at first setteth forth good wine, and when men have well drank, then that which is worse. But thou hast kept the good wine until now." (*John*, ii. 9, 10.) The customs of the world are contrary to those of Jesus Christ, because the spirit of the world by which they are directed, is in all things opposed to the spirit of God. If you would draw any line of distinction in this general opposition, it would be true to say, that which is most contrary to the spirit of the Son of God,

is that which is most human, or least elevated above the senses and natural reason. Be not then of the number of those who lead a life altogether sensual and terrestrial, which bears no resemblance to Jesus Christ crucified, either according to the flesh by mortification, or according to the spirit of humility, which St. Paul calls by excellence the virtue of Jesus Christ!

2nd Point. Consider—amongst the customs of worldlings, the most dangerous, and the most opposed to the spirit of the Incarnate Wisdom, is the avidity with which they enjoy the delights of the present life, without considering that their end can be no other than everlasting woe. A miserable eternity is the dregs of the wine with which the world inebriates its votaries; in the commencement it serves them with that which seems good, but when the transitory joy is exhausted, they shall find in that cup of Babylon only the dregs of which they must drink for an eternity. "In the hand of the Lord there is a cup of strong wine full of mixture. And he hath poured it out from this to that; but the dregs thereof are not emptied: all the sinners of the earth shall drink." (*Ps.* lxxiv. 9.) Unheard-of folly, exclaims St. Chrysostom, to purchase momentary pleasure, at the price of everlasting sorrow! The present life, considered relatively to the future, is as the dream of a short night compared to a thousand years. What blindness then, for the fleeting gratification of a moment, to plunge into everlasting torments, and with the rich man in the Gospel to cry out during eternity, "I am tormented in this flame." Hear the admonition of Wisdom: "Look not upon the wine when it is yellow, when the colour thereof shineth in the glass; it goeth in pleasantly, but in the end it will bite like a snake, and will spread abroad poison like a basilisk." (*Prov.* xxiii. 31, 32.)

3rd Point. Consider—Jesus Christ, the divine spouse of our souls, daily changes wine into his precious blood

at that celestial feast which he commences here below in the holy Eucharist, and which he will consummate in the glory of his never-ending kingdom. Then shall we say to him: "Thou hast kept the good wine until now." Thou hast given us of the cup of sorrow in time, but with these ineffable delights which sense has not tasted, nor the human mind conceived, thou wilt inebriate us for eternity. "According to the multitude of my sorrows in my heart, thy consolations have made my soul joyful." (*Ps.* xciii. 19.) This is an effect of the precious wine of which is written, it "rejoiceth the heart of man." (*Prov.* iii.) For in approaching the holy Communion, and receiving the blood that flowed from the sacred Heart of Jesus, do we not draw waters with joy from the Saviour's fountains, which so inebriate the soul, as to obliterate the false maxims of the world, to deaden the propensities of corrupt nature, and impel her to run on in the thorny path, whilst with generous devotedness she says in the words of the Royal Prophet: "My heart and my flesh hath rejoiced in the living God." (*Ps.* lxxxiii 3.)

THURSDAY.

On Jesus casting the buyers and sellers out of the Temple.

1st Point. Consider—"The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up." (*John*, ii. 17.) The heart of the just man is the temple of God, where he enters by sanctifying grace, and dwells by faith and charity: "Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (*Cor.* iii. 16.) "For you are the temple of the living God: as God saith: I will dwell in them, and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." (*Cor.* vi. 16.) Whence it follows, you should consider your soul and

body as sacred, being consecrated to God in baptism, honoured with his divine presence, and the continual influence of his graces and lights. Incomparable dignity! that exalts the Christian soul above all that the world values. The holy Fathers esteem the Blessed Virgin more happy in being the temple of the Incarnate Word by faith and love, than in giving him to the world by his temporal birth.

2nd POINT. Consider—Jesus Christ is most jealous of the purity of your heart, which is his sanctuary, since he would be therein honoured, and display in it the marvels of his grace. Lord, says David: "Holy is thy temple, wonderful in justice." (*Ps.* lxxiv. 4.) He says not, it is admirable in its exterior embellishments, but in its justice, which word implies all virtues. David desiring to contemplate the greatness of God, says in the ardour of his heart: "I shall go over into the place of the wonderful tabernacle, even to the house of God." (*Ps.* xli. 5.) The faithful soul is the dwelling place of God on earth; in this sanctuary she renders him a profound homage, by perfect obedience, fervour in the discharge of all her duties, fidelity in resisting all inordinate propensities, patience, which extends even to what is most opposed to the inclinations of nature and charity, which is exercised without exception. If any one, says St. Leo, would know whether God dwells within him, let him examine with what humility he resists pride, with what sincerity and benevolence he stifles envy, in what contempt he holds praise, what joy he feels in the benefits conferred on his neighbour, what generosity in forgetting an injury rather than efface the image of God from his heart; in fine, let him examine if he love God and his neighbour with his whole heart, so as to rejoice in the prosperity even of his enemy, as if it were his own. If such dispositions govern his heart, he may be assured that God dwells therein.

3rd Point. Consider—the sweetness and clemency of Jesus Christ, prevent him not from chastising with rigour those who profane his sanctuary; that is, who sully the purity of the soul consecrated by his presence. At all times and in all places you are his temple. Beware then of offending him who dwells in this temple, lest being abandoned by him it fall to ruin. If Oza was punished with sudden death, for not supporting the Ark of the Lord when in danger of falling, what chastisement may you not apprehend, if by sin you wilfully cast down his Ark, which is your soul? Fear you not that dreadful sentence of the Apostle: "If any man violate the temple of God; him shall God destroy." (1 *Cor.* iii. 17.) Apply to yourself the words of the Son of God to those whom he cast out of the temple: "Take these things hence." (*John*, ii. 16.) Remove from your heart this jealousy, contempt of others, desires of revenge, rash judgments, irreverence, and self-love, "and make not the house of my Father, a house of traffic," (*John*, ii. 16,) in which self-love carries on a profane commerce with the enemies of God, the world, the flesh, and the devil. If he make a scourge for your correction, refuse not the stroke of that paternal hand, that wounds but to heal. The consummation of evil would be, were he to abandon you as incorrigible.

O Lord! "Cast me not away from thy face, and take not thy holy spirit from me." (*Ps.* 1. 13.) Divine Spirit, Spirit of love, Spirit of zeal, come purify thy temple, burn and destroy all that displeases thee therein; "And this may be my comfort, that afflicting me with sorrow *thou* spare not, nor I contradict the words of the Holy One." (*Job.* vi. 10.)

FRIDAY.

On the Jews demanding a sign from Jesus Christ.

1st Point. Consider—"What sign dost thou show unto us, seeing that thou dost these things?" (*John*, ii. 18.) Amongst the Jews who beheld the Son of God cast the buyers and sellers out of the temple, some demanded a miracle in proof of his authority. Such murmuring is ordinarily among men when God chastises them with some sensible and unexpected affliction. They ask, what have they done to incur so great a misfortune. Even the virtuous are subject to this temptation, and resist it with difficulty. This weakness proceeds from want of light to penetrate the judgments of God, who always acts from most just reasons; sometimes they consider not that their own sins make up the scourge with which they are stricken by divine justice. "If he judge and condemn us, we constrain him thereto, but the benefits he confers issue from the source of his own infinite goodness and mercy," says St. Bernard. Banish sin from your soul, and you will prevent all its consequent evils; otherwise divine justice will pronounce against you the same sentence inflicted on David: "The sword shall never depart from thy house, because thou hast despised me." (2 *Kings*, x. 12.) Such murmuring is often the effect of impatience, which will suffer nothing repugnant to sense or painful to self-love; it also proceeds from a secret pride, the enemy of subjection and humiliation. From whatever cause this rebellion arises, stifle it promptly, saying with David: "I am prepared for scourges; (*Ps.* xxxvii. 18;) or with Jesus Christ himself: "The chalice which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (*John*, xviii. 11.)

2nd Point. Consider—"Jesus answered and said to them, destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. The Jews then said: six and forty years

was this temple in building, and wilt thou raise it up in three days? But he spoke of the temple of his body." (*John*, ii. 18, 19.) The objection of the Jews furnishes occasion of a solid and important observation on the time employed in erecting the edifice of perfection, which is the temple of the living God. Some persons, imitating their Divine Master with a laudable fervour, complete in a short space the house of God; others, from a shameful negligence, after many years, have scarcely laid the foundation of the edifice of perfection. Are you not of this number? Do you not labour coldly and tepidly for your spiritual advancement? Do you not often interrupt the work, or cast down again that which you had already built? Reflect seriously hereon, and press forward in the path of perfection; and in order to repair the loss you have sustained of so many precious moments, say with the Royal Prophet; "If I shall enter into the tabernacle of my house: if I shall go up into the bed wherein I lie: if I shall give sleep to my eyes, or slumber to my eyelids, or rest to my temples: until I find out a place for the Lord, a tabernacle for the God of Jacob." (*Ps.* cxxxi. 3, 4, 5.)

3rd Point. Consider—"Now when he was at Jerusalem at the pasch, upon the festival day, many believed in his name, seeing his signs which he did. But Jesus did not trust himself unto them." (*John*, ii. 23, 24.) May he not also justly diffide in you? What weakness does he discover in your will, what infidelity in your promises, what inconstancy in your resolutions, what levity in your entire conduct! But why did he not trust them? "For that he knew all men, and because he needed not that any should give testimony of man: for he knew what was in man." (*John*, ii. 24, 25.) In vain therefore do you conceal with such care your defects, in vain use so many artifices, and envelop your designs in such disguises. You cannot deceive God: he penetrates your most secret thoughts, and will one

day unveil them in the presence of all men. "Therefore judge not before the time; until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of hearts." (*Cor.* iv. 5.)

SATURDAY.

On Nicodemus coming to Jesus Christ.

1st Point. Consider—"And there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night, and said to him: Rabbi, we know that thou art come a teacher from God; for no man can do these signs which thou dost, unless God be with him." (*John*, iii. 1, 2.) This reflection produces the desire of being instructed, and of conferring with Jesus Christ on the things of heaven. "For no man can do these signs which thou dost, unless God be with him." Such is the motive of his belief. Observe the power of zeal to touch and convert hearts. According to St. Chrysostom, this virtue is most pleasing to God, to whom nothing is so dear as the salvation of souls. Therefore, when you labour for the conversion of souls, it is a mark that God is with you; he inspires this zeal, and will not fail to give it strength and efficacy. Whilst Nicodemus is enlightened by grace, others remain in darkness. "The spirit breatheth where he will; and thou hearest his voice." (*John*, iii. 8.) These are secrets hidden from man. The works of God are impenetrable; we neither know their origin nor their end: both surpass our understanding. Admire the meekness, patience, and wisdom of the Master, whom the eternal Father sends. What is your desire to hear, or docility to profit by his instructions? With what fidelity and courage do you obey his precepts and

counsels? May he not say to you as to Nicodemus: "Amen, amen, I say to thee, that we speak what we know, and we testify what we have seen, and you receive not our testimony." (*John*, iii. 11.)

2nd POINT. Consider—"This man came to Jesus by night." Nicodemus chooses the hour of silence and repose, as that most suitable for treating with and receiving the lights of heaven. O that the wise ones of the world would consult Jesus Christ, as did this learned doctor, to be instructed by him in all that regards the duties of their state! or that they imitated David, who gave himself to prayer in the profound silence of the night! St. Chrysostom is of opinion that Nicodemus came by night, because he feared drawing upon himself the hatred and indignation of the Jews, who were scandalized at the poverty of Christ. This weakness was in some degree excusable in a man who came, for the first time, to visit the Son of God; but you who make profession of being his disciple, and who are ashamed of the practices of piety and zeal, who seek dispensations from duty through human respect—you are without excuse. What an impediment in the way of virtue is human respect! How many good desires does it stifle? how many good actions does it render abortive? how many sinners does it destroy? "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world." (*Gal.* vi. 14.) "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel." (*Rom.* i. 16.) I am not ashamed to pardon an injury, to suffer contempt; in a word, to bear the livery of Jesus Christ, who for my sake underwent the opprobrium and ignominy of the cross.

3rd POINT. Consider—"Amen, amen, I say to thee, unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." (*John*, iii. 5.) The Son of God seeing in the heart of his disciple a sincere desire of acquiring the science of

salvation, commences by te ling him that he must be born to a new life. "Nicodemus answered, and said to him: How can these things be done? Jesus answered, and said to him: Art thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these things?" (*John*, iii. 9, 10.) Then he discovers to him the principal mysteries of salvation; his mission and incarnation: "For God so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son." The death he was to undergo: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up." The design of God in this mystery: "For God sent not his Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world may be saved by him." The necessity of faith: "That whosoever believeth in him, may not perish." The chastisement of those who believe not: "But he that doth not believe is already judged." In fine, the reason why they do not believe: "For every one that doth evil hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, that his works may not be reproved." (*John*, iii.) Such is the cause of the sinner's condemnation. He would satisfy his passion, but will not bear the penalty; if he cannot hide the deformity of crime, he voluntarily blinds himself thereto, that he may sin with more liberty. The cause of his condemnation is, that he prefers the world, which is but darkness, to Jesus Christ, who is the true light.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

On St. John giving testimony of Jesus Christ, at his return from Jerusalem.

1st Point. Consider—"And John also was baptizing in Ennon, near Salim." Learn from the example of St John, who retired with humility at the approach of our Lord, to yield willingly to others, preferring them to yourself, and rendering to each one that honour and

respect which their peculiar situation requires. Repose of soul can only be found when you have eradicated pride, the source of disquietude. How profound a peace would you enjoy, could you say with St. Jerome: Although I am guilty of many crimes, and daily beseech God to pardon the sins of my youth, nevertheless, knowing that God resists the proud, and gives his grace to the humble, even from childhood I have shunned above all things a spirit of pride and haughtiness, which provokes the hatred and indignation of God. Learn also to render virtue solid, by uniting the interior with the exterior practice. Be not content with a false appearance, as hypocrites, who conceal their ambition and pride under the mask of humility. How often have you displayed the shadow of virtue, devoid of the animating spirit? You seemed patient, yet you interiorly murmured. You gave exterior marks of charity, meekness, and humility; whilst your heart nourished sentiments of aversion, bitterness, disdain, or vanity. He that is truly humble, would be reputed vile and abject, not praised for humility. He rejoices in contempt, and his only pride consists in despising the praises of men.

2nd Point. Consider—"And there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews concerning purification. And they came to John, and said to him: Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond the Jordan, to whom thou gavest testimony, behold he baptizeth, and all men come to him." (*John*, iii. 25, 26.) Examine the faults into which a spirit of jealousy led these disciples. They treat Jesus Christ with contempt; they tacitly accuse him of ingratitude, and exaggerate to St. John the prejudice his reputation sustains. Yet it is persons of piety who fall into this weakness; so artful is self-love in deceiving itself. Distrust, therefore, the specious appearances under which the old serpent hides his venom. "Let us not be made desirous

of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another." (*Gal.* v. 26.) "Charity envieth not;" (1 *Cor.* xiii. 4;) it rejoices in the happiness of others as in its own. Those who are united in the bonds of a holy charity reciprocally enjoy the good which each possesses, although all have not received the same graces. Be not envious—what I possess is yours: let me banish envy—that which you have is mine. Envy separates, charity unites all in one common interest.

3rd Point. Consider—"John answered and said: A man cannot receive any thing, unless it be given him from heaven. You yourselves do bear me witness, that I said I am not Christ, but that I am sent before him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, who standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth with joy because of the bridegroom's voice. This my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease." (*John*, iii. 27, *et seq.*) The words of the holy precursor contain a lesson of true zeal, which tramples on envy and ambition by referring all glory to God alone. Humble yourself as did St. John, if like him you would be great in the estimation of God. Jesus Christ must increase in you, in order that you may increase in his knowledge and love; and in proportion as you increase in the knowledge of God, you will learn to despise the littleness of all that is human. Let us, therefore, concludes St. Augustin, exalt the glory of God, and abase our own, to the end ours also may increase in God. The apostle admonishes, "That he who glories should glory in the Lord."

MONDAY.

On the imprisonment of St. John the Baptist.

1st Point. Consider—"For Herod had apprehended John, and bound him, and put him into prison." (*Matt.* xiv. 3.) The holy precursor reproves vice without fear or human respect. Herod feared him on account of the great esteem in which his virtue was held amongst the people. He meditated his destruction, but for a time dissembled. In the end, overcome by passion, he commands him to be cast into prison Learn from St. John Baptist the power of virtue, which is feared and respected even by the wicked. Herod fears John; he seeks and caresses him, whilst John fearlessly reproves his crimes. Nevertheless, Herod is a king, and the Baptist is poor, but he is holy, and that far outweighs the royal dignity. His only care is to draw hearts to Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ watches over him, and renders him venerable even to his enemies. In Herod you learn how weak is human respect to restrain us within the bounds of duty. For sooner or later it will yield to the assaults of passion. He that fears man and not God, is easily drawn from the path of duty. Human fear may for a time suspend the execution of crime, but cannot rectify the will. Fly sin from supernatural motives, fly it because it is displeasing to God, because it is an infraction of the divine law, and will infallibly entail everlasting punishment. The fear of God alone can correct the sinner, destroy vice, establish the soul in innocence, and confirm the will in the practice of virtue.

2nd Point. Consider—the alacrity and courage with which St. John accepts imprisonment and chains. He is not disturbed at being treated as a criminal, although he had been honoured as a prophet. He complains not

of the injustice of Herod. He continues to exercise the office of precursor, and changes his prison into a place of prayer and holiness The saints received affliction without losing their tranquillity even for a moment, knowing they were under the protecting hand of God, who directs all things for his own glory, and makes all succeed to the benefit of his elect. When you meet any sensible humiliation, look not to secondary causes; the stroke comes from on high: it is the hand of God that strikes. For him you suffer, to satisfy his justice, to expiate your sins, and secure your eternal salvation. Prosperity is the gift of God for our consolation; adversity is his gift also for our correction. Thus St. Augustine: you are not a Christian to dispense with the cross, from which no one is exempt, but to gain heaven by sufferings, which, however great they be, can never equal those which Jesus Christ vouchsafed to undergo for your everlasting happiness.

3rd POINT. Consider—"And he sent, and beheaded John in prison. And his disciples came and took the body and buried it, and came and told Jesus. Which when Jesus had heard, he retired from thence." (*Matt.* xiv. 10, 12, 13.) The Incarnate Wisdom, foreknowing the jealousy of the Pharisees, meekly withdraws and passes into Galilee. He is not ignorant that the glorious actions of the Baptist had embittered these proud spirits who were instrumental in his imprisonment and death. Therefore he ceased to baptize in Judea, because he would not give them a pretext to intrench on his liberty, as the time of his passion was not yet come. From this example learn to yield to others, even when they unjustly thwart your designs, in order that you may not irritate, but gain them by meekness. Already does the Son of God seem to say—"Learn of me, that I am meek and humble of heart" (*Matt.* xi. 29.) Admirable doctrine of the master of humility! He teaches his disciples only that which he is, and commands them

only that which he does. Why does the least contradiction provoke, and why feel you such difficulty in yielding to others? Because you are proud; because you know not your own defects, nor sufficiently distrust your own evil inclinations. Tremble at the sight of your sins. The reproach of your conscience will soften the austerity of your temper; you will take every thing in good part, and consider yourself treated much beyond your deserts—if you only reflect a little upon the enormity of your sins.

TUESDAY.

On the conversion of the Samaritan Woman.

1st Point. Consider—"Jesus, therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well." (*John*, iv. 6.) Jesus returning into Galilee and passing through Samaria, is oppressed by fatigue, for he journeyed on foot. According to St. Chrysostom, he instructs his followers by this example, that their lives also must be painful and laborious: yet how many hours do you idly trifle away? Your sins are the burden that oppress the Son of God. Your disobedience wearies, your tepidity causes his langour. Ah! says St. Augustine, let us at least find our strength in his weakness, and our repose in his lassitude. Jesus reposes on the well of Jacob, only that he may labour for the conversion of a sinner. He awaits the Samaritan woman who comes to draw water, and mercifully prevents her by his grace. How admirable the care with which the Son of God watches over our souls! Not one is unworthy of being remembered by him. He has annihilated himself to show their value; and has given his life to render them precious by the amount of the ransom. Although wearied by his journey, he ceases not to seek sinners

whom his zeal embraces with a tenderness that would draw all to himself. Beseech him to grant you also that preventing grace, without which no one can come unto him.

2nd Point. Consider—"There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus saith to her: Give me to drink." (*John*, iv. 7.) Thus he also acts towards us. He asks a little, in order that he may give much. From some he asks water, that is the tears of sincere repentance; from others, a little bread, an alms, an act of charity towards the poor; of some again the renunciation of a dangerous gratification, of an inordinate attachment to creatures, which must be broken previous to being restored to the grace of God. Examine what he demands of you; he frequently whispers it in your interior; reproaching your unwillingness to make the sacrifice. "Then that Samaritan woman saith to him: How dost thou, being a Jew, ask of me to drink, who am a Samaritan woman? For the Jews do not communicate with the Samaritans." (*John*, iv. 9.) But the Son of God is not repelled by this rude refusal; on the contrary he takes occasion to speak to her of that heavenly water which he came to offer. "If thou didst know the gift of God, and who he is who saith to thee: give me to drink, thou perhaps would have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." (*John*, iv. 10.) If you knew the gift offered in this occasion of mortification, this opportunity of correcting a vice, or performing a work of piety! "The woman saith to him: Sir, thou hast nothing wherein to draw, and the well is deep; from whence then hast thou living water?" (*John*, iv. 4.) In those afflictions with which God visits you, why are you diffident and pusillanimous? why do you fear to abandon yourself unreservedly to God, as if he were not powerful enough to be your protection and consolation? When the heart is visited by divine grace, its vain desires are stifled, its

troubles appeased, and it conceives a disgust for all created objects.

3rd Point. Consider—"The woman saith to him: Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come hither to draw." (*John*, iv. 15.) The Samaritan being touched with a desire of the water of divine grace, the Son of God labours for her conversion. First, he discovers to her the disorders in which she lived; then he inspires a faith in the Messiah; he teaches her to adore God in spirit and in truth, and infuses such light and ardour into her heart, that leaving her water-pot, she publishes the coming of the Messiah throughout the city, saying: "Come, and see a man who has told me all things whatsoever I have done. Is not he the Christ? They went therefore out of the city, and came unto him." (*John*, iv. 29, 30.) Admire here the progress of grace, which converts an abandoned sinner into an eminent saint, leading her in a moment through all the degrees of the purgative, illuminative, and unitive life. "And immediately his disciples came; and they wondered that he talked with the woman. In the meantime the disciples prayed him, saying: Rabbi, eat. But he said to them: I have meat to eat, which you know not. The disciples therefore said one to another: Hath any man brought him to eat? Jesus saith to them: My meat is to do the will of him that sent me." (*John*, iv.) Adore the secret judgments of God, who converts Samaria in one day, whilst three years suffice not for the conversion of the Jews, whom he had chosen for his own people; so difficult is it to restore to grace, and rekindle the fire of divine love in a soul that has fallen after having known Jesus Christ, and abused the lights imparted to her.

WEDNESDAY.

On the efficacy of Divine Inspirations.

1st Point. Consider—"Jesus answered and said to her: if thou didst know the gift of God, and who he is that saith to thee: Give me to drink; thou, perhaps, would have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." (*John*, iv. 10.) If you knew whence proceeds the good thought that arises in your heart, you would hold it in far greater estimation than you are wont to do. A good thought is the breathing of the Holy Ghost, and surpasses all the power of nature. No mind, how elevated soever, can produce it without supernatural aid. According to St. Paul: "No man can say, the Lord Jesus, but by the Holy Ghost." (1 *Cor.* xii. 3.) The spirit of the flesh can only suggest thoughts more conformable to its nature; and without the succour of grace it never can produce a single sentiment capable of leading us to God. When the Samaritan woman left the city, she thought neither of her salvation nor the happiness that awaited her. Our Saviour's meeting with her was not casual, he expected her at the well of Jacob, that she might drink of the fountain of his mercy. Thus, when you are touched interiorly by some object that meets your senses, attribute it not to chance; it has been providentially designed from eternity, to awaken your faith and charity. It is God inspires this salutary thought that leads your heart to compunction and penance. In what esteem would you hold this grace, did you consider it in its principle: "If thou didst know the gift of God!"

2nd Point. Consider—"If thou didst know the gift of God, and who he is that saith to thee: Give me to drink." Did you know who he is that has merited for you the grace of this holy inspiration, and at what price it has been purchased, far from rejecting, you

would receive it with the liveliest affection and gratitude. As God alone can produce this good thought in the mind, so nothing less than the blood of his divine Son could have purchased it for you. Wherefore, the Holy Fathers, publishing the mercies of God, and commenting on the words of the royal Prophet: "For nothing thou shalt save them," (*Ps.* lv. 8,) say, by a moral application, that he saves us gratuitously, because he gratuitously bestows the lights and graces instrumental to our salvation. So precious are they, that the whole creation does not contain a treasure sufficient for the purchase. The Saviour of the world alone could merit them, and in order to effect this, he spared neither the sweat of his brow, nor the blood of his veins, neither the labours of his life, nor the torments of his death. Be persuaded then, that the voice which speaks in your interior, tenderly soliciting you to overcome such an evil custom, to return into the ways of God, is the voice of that precious blood shed on Calvary, that voice which broke forth as thunder, when the Holy Ghost descended, and rained fire from heaven to inflame the heart of man.

3rd Point. Consider—"At his voice he giveth a multitude of waters in the heaven, and lifteth up the clouds from the ends of the earth: he maketh lightnings for rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures." (*Jer.* x. 13.) But as the rain not only nourishes the fertile field, but falls profitless on the sands, the rocks, the thorns, or the highway: so the graces of the Holy Ghost remain barren, notwithstanding the virtues they derive from the cross, unless they descend upon hearts that appreciate their value. This grace falling on the Samaritan, of an abandoned sinner makes her a herald, announcing salvation to the city of Samaria. But for one Samaritan who receives this heavenly dew with gratitude, and employs it with advantage, how many hearts remain impenitent, and

hardened as the rock! How many, attached to earth, produce only vain desires, that are stifled by the cares and solicitudes of the world! How many worldly minds, open as the highway, where it is trodden under foot with signal contempt! How many vindictive spirits, that, like the burning sands of Lybia, abound only in serpents and lions. Yet it is the blood of Jesus Christ that is rendered fruitless; it is the voice of the Incarnate Word, not less precious than his blood; in fine, it is the expiring sigh of a God, and his last cry from the gibbet of the cross, and which expresses all the empire and power which he ought to possess over our rebellious wills. Judge from this the value of a good thought, and the offence of which you are guilty when unfaithful to its inspiration, since it is the most excellent fruit of the cross of Jesus Christ, which you cannot reject without renouncing his merits, and rendering his sufferings unavailable to your salvation.

THURSDAY.

On the efficacy of Divine Inspirations, continued.

1st Point. Consider—"If thou didst know the gift of God." (*John*, iv.) If you knew whither this good thought tends, and to what happiness it conducts, you would follow it with more fervour and fidelity. The designs which the Saviour of mankind proposed on entering the world, may be reduced to three heads: to form saints on earth; to people heaven with blessed souls; and procure the glory of his Father by the virtues of the one and the happiness of the other. The principal means devised by him for the execution of a project, so worthy of his goodness and so advantageous to you, are no other than the good sentiments with which he inspires your mind and will. Consequently

you should receive them as a treasure, in which are contained all the favours he designs for you in time and eternity. The first design of the Son of God is to re-establish his glory in the world, and teach men to serve him in spirit and in truth. He effects this by shedding on your soul a ray of his grace—that is, a holy inspiration. Thus he commences his reign in your understanding and heart. The glory of his divine attributes depends not on your homage; but if he require you to adore him as God, it is necessary to impart a knowledge of himself, and this he does by forming good thoughts in your mind. Does he demand of you to glorify his wisdom? He first discovers the secrets of his providence, his great designs, and the admirable means by which he leads you to their accomplishment. Then will you say, in a transport of love: Divine Wisdom, how adorable are thy counsels! How admirable the way by which thou leadest thy elect! Does he require you to adore the amiable rigours of his justice? He unveils the enormity of your sins, as he did to the Samaritan, in order that the view of your disorders may constrain you to submit to his divine will, to acknowledge you have deserved the chastisement, and that it is light compared with your offences. Whence proceeds this interior light and these sentiments of compunction, but from a good thought!

2nd Point. Consider—the design which Jesus Christ proposes, next to the glory of his Father, is to convert sinners and transform them into saints. For this end he descended from heaven, and expired on a cross. A movement of grace, a secret inspiration, is the means by which he effects this end. He draws the free will by a good thought, he strengthens it for the execution of its good purposes, he sustains it by the gift of perseverance. Whence proceeds the final perseverance on which our eternal salvation depends? On the grace that crowns a good life with a happy

death. A holy life depends on the exercise of good works; good works depend on pious desires; and these proceed from good thoughts. Are you really persuaded of this? Do you believe that a good thought is the first principle of all the merits of the saints; the root of all their virtues; the source of all their sanctity? Are you convinced that without this first grace, there could be neither faith among Christians, nor charity among the just, nor sanctity among the children of God? Do you consider that it has peopled the desert with penitents, the prisons with martyrs, the cloisters with religious, the Church with confessors, and heaven with saints? If you believe, whence comes it, that when Jesus Christ presents this favour, you fear its importunity, you close your heart, or if you give it entrance, you shackle, and endeavour to stifle it within you, without fearing the evil consequences, or foreseeing the chastisements such infidelity must incur, without reflecting that such contempt or refusal exposes you to the danger of losing the sovereign good, without which you will be eternally miserable?

3rd Point. Consider—with what respect you should hear, with what affection you should receive, and with what fidelity obey the inspirations of God. Remember, that the heavenly lights with which God favours you, however precious in themselves, become useless without co-operation on your part, and that they are fruitless, if you cultivate them not. In vain does the Son of God speak, if you listen not to his voice; in vain does he call, if you refuse to follow. You must quit the earth, if you desire that divine grace bear you to heaven. You must remove all obstacles, and overcome these passions and inordinate attachments, which are the bonds that retain you in vice. The design of the Son of God, in shedding the light of his grace on the darkness of your soul, is to manifest the dangerous state into which tepidity has plunged you, to infuse a spirit of penance.

to encourage a practice of mortification and all virtues. But what will it avail to know his will, if you continue rebellious; to see the beauty of virtue, if you do not embrace its exercise; to show the way that leads to God, if you remain attached to creatures? You behold the light with satisfaction; the knowledge it imparts consoles, and affects you even unto tears. But this is only a frail flower, not the fruit. The fruit of light is the exercise of good works, the spirit of compunction, and the eradication of vice. To knowledge must succeed desires, to desires works. If these are wanting, the light is obscured, grace remains sterile; one day a rigorous account of its abuse will be demanded, and you will be found so much the more criminal, as the treasure which you have neglected or abused is beyond all price and estimation.

FRIDAY.

On the Ruler seeking the cure of his Son.

1st Point. Consider—"And there was a certain ruler whose son was sick at Capharnaum. He having heard that Jesus was come from Judea into Galilee, went to him, and prayed him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death Jesus, therefore, saith to him: unless you see signs and wonders you believe not. The ruler saith to him: Lord, come down before that my son die." (*John*, iv. 46, *et seq.*) The soul is sick unto death, when the violence of temptation has reduced it to extremity, and if not promptly succoured, is on the point of losing the grace of God. Concupiscence, which insensibly weakens divine love in the soul, will extinguish it in the end, if we bring not a speedy remedy. Happy he of whom it can be said, as of the son of this ruler, "The fever left him;" (*John*,

iv. 52 ;) his inordinate affections have "left him ;" self-love no longer reigns in his heart; the inferior appetite is submissive to the spirit, and the spirit to God! Spare nothing for your perfect cure, do violence to yourself, make use of the necessary remedies, however bitter to nature, since it is to preserve the life of your soul.

2nd POINT. Consider—"Lord, come down before that my son die." This good father, bereft of hope from human means, has recourse to Jesus Christ, expecting from his power and goodness his son's restoration to health. He conjures him, saying: "Lord, come down before that my son die." It is a fatal abuse to sin through presumption, and to inflict a mortal wound on the soul, under pretext that you will confess and atone for it by penance. "And say not: the mercy of the Lord is great, and he will have mercy on the multitude of my sins. For mercy and wrath quickly come from him, and his wrath looketh upon sinners." (*Eccles.* v. 6, 7.) Men, says St. Augustine, risk their eternal salvation equally by hope and despair, although these extremes are so widely removed, these dispositions so contrary. They suffer themselves to be deceived by hope, who say: God is good, God is merciful. I will, therefore, follow my inclinations, indulge my will, gratify my senses, and accomplish all my desires. Why not? God is merciful, he is patient and long-suffering. These endanger their souls' eternal happiness by a false hope. There is much reason to fear that hope will be the death of your soul, and that you will fall into the hands of God's justice, because you presumed on his mercy. If God *will search Jerusalem with lamps*, according to the word of his prophet; if the good works of the just do not render them secure; how dare you sin presuming on pardon?

3rd POINT. Consider—"Lord, come down before that my son die." It is not surprising that the present life is subject to so many miseries, since it is a con-

tinual death: but it is strange that we would perish in our misery, because we will not go to Jesus Christ, or that we go to him too late, or when human aid fails us; in fine, we go not with that confidence and purity of intention he requires. Since it is from Jesus Christ alone you can expect the remedy of your evils, imitate this afflicted father, who procured from him in his affliction the succour he had vainly sought among men. Go to him at all times, and in all your necessities. Are you sick? Go to him as your physician, leave to him the care of healing you as he shall deem expedient. Are you afflicted with interior pains and darkness? Go to him who is the true light, that you may be enlightened. Is your heart oppressed with sadness? Go to him who is the source of joy, and he will console you. Are you persecuted by creatures? Go to the Creator, who will sustain you against all their malice. If you have fallen into any fault, arise promptly. Be not discouraged by your weakness, nor let a secret pride cause you to repine: silence the complaints of self-love, and linger not in your imperfections through a shameful indolence. Go with speed to Jesus Christ, and beseech him to come to your assistance.

Let thy greatness, O Lord, condescend to my nothingness: save me lest I perish. Look upon my misery, with the eye of thy mercy, that I may return to thee in a spirit of penance, and with an unbounded gratitude for all thy favours.

SATURDAY.

On the delay of repentance.

1st Point. Consider—"Lord, come down before that my son die." (*John*, iv. 49.) The longer your conversion is deferred, the more difficult it becomes

with regard to God, on whose goodness it depends. "Knowest thou not, that the benignity of God leadeth thee to penance?" (*Rom* ii. 4.) Are not all the moments of your life in his power? Is he not the master of his own graces? Can you, without his aid, form even one good thought? Reflect on the prayer of the Church: Lord, whilst you afford us a favourable time to return to thee, give us also the spirit of penance. For in vain have we time to correct our faults, if thou grantest not also the gift of compunction, to amend our lives. Do you expect to obtain mercy, and dispose yourself for divine grace by multiplying your offences, and deferring your conversion, in contempt of these holy inspirations, and interior reproaches of your conscience? Will you not thus provoke his anger, and have you not cause to fear, that offended by your repeated refusals, he will turn from you in his wrath? To what tend these delays, but to multiply your sins? Will you be wicked because God is good? Is it thus you despise the riches of his clemency and patience? This day he invites you, and you defer answering his invitation until to-morrow. Thus have many sinners perished, who flattered themselves with a vain security, repeating always, to-morrow, to-morrow. You think you will have time; you reckon on many years to come, and perhaps this may be your last day. "Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee: and whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" (*Luke*, xii. 20.) "Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day. For his wrath shall come on a sudden, and in the time of vengeance he will destroy thee." (*Eccles.* v. 8, 9.)

2nd Point. Consider—the longer you defer your conversion, the more difficult it becomes on your own part. For although repentance is a gift of God, nevertheless it requires your own co-operation. "Not I, but the grace of God with me." (*Cor.* xv. 10.) The

glory belongs to God, the merit is mine. "This is the change of the right hand of the most high." (*Ps.* lxxvi. 11.) The longer you defer your conversion, the more incapable your heart becomes of receiving and following the movements of grace; because your evil habits daily increasing, become more difficult to be vanquished; and as evil habits increase, the darkness of the soul increases with them. Thus you become involved in a fatal blindness, which conceals, or at least disguises, your faults, so that they appear light or even agreeable. Afterwards, the will becomes so strongly attached thereto, that by long custom it contracts so violent an inclination to evil, that sin in some manner becomes a necessity; not that it is strictly and absolutely so, but because it cannot be resisted without extreme violence. This renders conversion so difficult that it would seem almost impossible.

Grant me grace, O my God, to execute without delay the resolution with which thou inspirest me, and to labour, from this moment, to overcome my evil habits.

3rd Point. Consider—the longer you defer your conversion, the more power the devil gains over your soul. This mortal enemy uses all his efforts to lead you into sin, and then endeavours to turn you from repentance, the only remedy for that evil. He cares not by what means he engages you in sin, provided he can gain an empire over you. He endeavours to retain you in the bonds of sin, sometimes by shame, sometimes by fear, sometimes by the desire of pleasure; and if he cannot entirely stifle the sentiments of repentance, he endeavours to deceive you by malicious artifices. If you suffer yourself to be deceived by the delays which the evil spirit tacitly suggests, and defer the care of your salvation to another day, you will be in imminent danger of losing it for ever. How many unexpected accidents may betray you into the worst of evils? Do you not perceive, that by delay you furnish arms to

your enemy, to combat against yourself? If you have not been able to vanquish him when armed with all the gifts of the Holy Ghost, and the infused virtues that accompany his grace, how will you resist him when you will be covered with wounds? Inasmuch as you multiply sins by delays, so many mortal wounds are inflicted on your soul, and the more you rivet those chains which retain you under the empire of the devil. Should death surprise you in this melancholy condition, there will be no longer time for repentance, your soul must become the prey of the fire that can never be extinguished. When your Creator placed you in the world, as a domestic in his own house, did he promise you should remain for a certain period? On the contrary, you dwell in it but by special favour, on condition of quitting it when such is the divine pleasure. As then he will one day issue the command, "Go forth from hence," and you know not when that hour will arrive, *be always ready*, as the Gospel admonishes, that you may never be surprised.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

On deferring Repentance to the hour of death.

1st Point. Consider—"Lord, come down before that my son die." (*John*, iv. 49.) If there is danger in delaying conversion from day to day, how much more in deferring it to the hour of death? God can indeed grant the grace of repentance to whom, and at what time soever he pleases; yet if we believe the Holy Fathers, there is nothing more rare, or more uncertain, than the repentance of a sinner at the hour of death. Hear the words of St. Augustine: If a dying sinner demand absolution, we refuse it not; yet I will not deceive you, I must speak the truth, I dare not promise

such a sinner that his salvation is secure. Consider and understand the sense of my words. Do I say he shall be damned? No. Do I say he shall be saved? By no means. What do I say? That I feel no security on either part, that I presume nothing. I promise nothing, because I have no certainty. Would you secure yourself against this doubt? Would you avoid this uncertainty? Do penance whilst you are still in health. For if now you perform condign penance, and that death unexpectedly follow, you are still secure. On what is this security grounded? On your having done penance while you had still the power of sinning; but if you will defer repentance until you can no longer sin, you do not renounce sin, but the power of sinning fails you. You will say, God perhaps will pardon me: true, I am persuaded of it; therefore I receive you to penance. Either God will pardon you, or he will not. I know not which it shall be. Therefore hold to that which is certain, and depend not on what is doubtful, in an affair too important to be abandoned to chance.

2nd Point. Consider—the reasons that render conversion so difficult and uncertain at the hour of death. The violence of the malady which overwhelms at once the mind and body prevents the sinner from raising his heart to God, and applying it to the exercise of penance. Sadness and fear so occupy and agitate the soul, that its sufferings engross all its attention. What folly to defer the most important of all concerns to a moment when you are incapable of even a serious thought! Penance should be voluntary, and proceed from a generous heart, that not only fears, but also loves its judge, and who renounces vice, not by constraint, but because he hates and detests it. There is much reason to fear that he who has neglected to do penance during life, is only impelled thereto in his last moments by necessity. The evil habits the sinner has contracted, and a passionate attachment to the goods and pleasures

of life, present another obstacle to conversion at the hour of death. How will he divest himself at that moment of long indulged sentiments, to assume such as are quite contrary? This change could only be hoped for by a miracle of grace, and will the sinner who has so often rejected the calls of God during life, expect a miracle in his favour at the hour of death? It is more probable that, by a just judgment, he who has long forgotten God, shall himself be forgotten in the end. Add to the foregoing reasons, the conversion of a soul, in order to be perfect, must include several heroic acts of virtue, the practice of which is difficult, especially when exercised for the first time. The sinner must return to God by faith, which impresses the mind with a lively apprehension of the justice of him whom he has offended; by hope, with which he casts himself into the arms of divine mercy; and love, by which he conceives a perfect sorrow for his offences. How shall a man who has never seriously thought of his salvation, elicit such holy acts? How shall a miserable slave, bound by as many chains as he has committed sins, vanquish temptations which the saints with difficulty resist at that last hour. "Because the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time." (*Apoc.* xii. 12.)

3rd Point. Consider—how false the hope on which the sinner defers conversion to the hour of death. On what does he rest the unhappy presumption that places his salvation in such imminent danger? Is it on the liberality with which he disposes of those goods which he quits only from necessity? Is it on the prayers and sacrifices offered after his death? But if surprised in sin at that awful hour, they are unprofitable. Is it in his tears and prayers? How can he assure himself that he will be favoured with the spirit of compunction; that his sighs and tears will be anything more than the indication of a mere human sorrow for parting this life?

Meditate seriously, while you have time, on the perils of death, through which you must infallibly pass. Your life flees by moments, of which the last must soon arrive, and the present alone is at your disposal. What will you do, when, overwhelmed with pain and anguish, deprived of human aid, you await the sentence, whether happy or unhappy, which must irrevocably decide your fate? Now it is in your power to secure a favourable sentence. Follow then the counsel of the prophet: "Seek ye the Lord, while he may be found; call on him, while he is near." (*Ps.* lv. 6.)

MONDAY.

On Jesus healing the Ruler's son.

1st Point. Consider—"Jesus therefore said to him: Unless you see signs and wonders you believe not." (*John*, iv. 48.) The reproach the Son of God makes to this ruler is a warning given you in his person. Your want of faith, confidence, and purity of intention, are the great obstacles to a perfect conversion. You seek your own interest, not the glory of God. It is with difficulty you abandon yourself to his conduct, as if he were unworthy of confidence. You are attached to sensible objects, as if your happiness depended on these, instead of resting on solid faith and pure love. You ask "signs and wonders;" you would see, taste, touch, and feel all things, without raising your mind above that which is material. Hence you lose courage when these fail; and when God withdraws sensible consolations, you also withdraw from him and from the number of his faithful servants, of whom it is said in holy Scripture: "But my just man liveth by faith: but if he withdraweth himself, he shall not please my soul. But we are not the children of withdrawing unto per-

dition, but of faith, to the saving of the soul." (*Heb.* x. 38, 39.) Wherefore seek Jesus for his own sake, and not from an interested self-love. If you approach, pressed by necessity, let it be in a spirit of humility and abandonment to his holy will. Beware of prescribing him a law, as did this ruler, who besought him to visit his house, in order to heal his son, as if he were not equally powerful, whether present or absent, to restore unto life, or preserve him from death.

2nd Point. Consider—"Jesus saith to him: Go, thy son liveth. The man believed the word which Jesus said to him, and went his way. And as he was going down, his servants met him, and they brought word, saying that his son lived." (*John*, iv. 50, 51.) Admire the infinite power of the Son of God. He has not recourse to prayer; he commands maladies and death, and he is obeyed. He goes not to the house of the sick person; his power extends to all places. He uses neither ceremonies nor remedies; his word alone suffices. At the same moment in which he speaks, the patient is restored to health. "Yesterday, at the seventh hour, the fever left him." (*John*, iv. 52.) O Jesus! say thou the word, command my tepidity, my vanity, and other passions to leave me, and my soul shall be healed. Reflect also on the clemency of Jesus Christ, even in the conjuncture where he seems most severe. The reproach he makes to the afflicted father is immediately followed by a signal benefit. This God of goodness heals at the moment he wounds, and his justice has not yet stricken when his mercy interposes.

O Lord, how infinite is thy goodness! What may we not hope from thy mercy, since even thy chastisements are a singular favour. "Give glory to the Lord, for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever." (*Ps.* cv. 1.)

3rd Point. Consider—"And himself believed, and

his whole house." (*John*, iv. 53.) The conversion of this ruler with his whole family, is an effect of gratitude for the benefit conferred by the Son of God, and at the same time, a new grace still greater than the former. If you are placed in authority, imitate this wise ruler, who establishes the reign of Jesus Christ in his house. He whom the Son of God has invested with power, should employ it in the first place, to have him served and honoured. He should be like the Centurion, on whom St. Luke pronounces this eulogium, that he was "a just man and one that feareth God." (*Acts*, x. 22.) He should render his family holy and devoted to the divine service. If you have no person under your charge, yet you have an empire to govern. Govern yourself. Regulate your interior. Cause all that is within, or dependent on you, to be submissive to the Son of God; your mind, in believing all that he has taught; your heart, in loving him; your tongue, in praising him; all your powers, in showing forth your faith in him, by the exercise of good works; in such manner that all that you are and possess may glorify him, and you may say with David: "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and let all that is within me bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and never forget all he hath done for thee." (*Ps.* cii. 1, 2.)

TUESDAY.

On Jesus beginning to preach the Gospel.

1st Point. Consider—"From that time Jesus began to preach and to say: Do penance, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (*Matt.* iv. 17.) This great master of the evangelical doctrine is the Son of the living God, the only begotten of the Father from all eternity, shining in the splendour of the saints, and rejoicing the

heavenly Jerusalem with the light of his wisdom, and who, nevertheless, disdains not to shed the rays of his brightness on this lower world, covered with the darkness of sin, and the shadow of death. "Doth not wisdom cry aloud, and prudence put forth her voice? Standing in the top of the highest places in the way, in the midst of the paths, beside the gates of the city." (*Prov.* viii. 1, 2, 3.) "For I make doctrine to shine forth to all as the morning light, and I will declare it afar off. I will penetrate to all the lower parts of the earth, and will behold all that sleep, and will enlighten all that hope in the Lord. I will yet pour out doctrine as prophecy, and will leave it to them that seek wisdom, and will not cease to instruct their offspring even to the holy age." (*Eccles.* xxxiv. 44, *et seq.*) The preaching of the Gospel shall not cease until "the holy age," that is, the age of eternity. "See that I have not laboured for myself only, but for all that seek discipline." (*Eccles.* xxxiii. 4.) Imagine you hear the Son of God saying: O mortals, I have entered into the world to teach you the ways of salvation; I have laboured, I have journeyed, I have endured fatigue and pains, solely for the glory of my Father and your interest. If you seek truth, let not my designs be frustrated, nor suffer yourselves to be deprived of that eternal good which I have purchased for you at such a price.

2nd Point. Consider—the excellence, the utility, and necessity of the doctrine of Jesus Christ. It is the science of salvation, the Gospel of the kingdom of heaven. "Thou hast made known to me the ways of life." (*Ps.* xv. 11.) Thou hast made known to me penance, humility, charity, patience, which are the paths that lead to eternal life, says St. Ambrose. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the nourishment of the soul; and indifference for this sacred nourishment is a sign of spiritual death. "O ye men, to you I call, and my voice is to the sons of men. O little ones, understand subtilty;

and ye unwise, take notice. Hear, for I will speak of great things: and my lips shall be opened to preach right things." (*Prov.* viii. 4, 5, 6.) "I am the Lord thy God, that teach thee profitable things." (*Isaiah*, xlviii. 17.) "Blessed is the man that heareth me, and that watcheth daily at my gates, and waiteth at the post of my doors. He that shall find me, shall find life, and shall have salvation from the Lord." (*Prov.* viii. 34, 35.) Dispose yourself therefore to receive it. The desired of nations is come: the kingdom of God is at hand. The sun of justice has arisen, to dispel the darkness of sin by the virtue of penance. The destruction of sin is the foundation of his doctrine; wherefore, "repent and believe the Gospel." (*Mark*, i. 15.)

3rd Point. Consider—"And Jesus returned in the power of the spirit into Galilee, and the fame of him went out through the whole country. And he taught in their synagogue, and was magnified by all." (*Luke*, iv. 14, 15.) Jesus acts only by the movement of the Divine Spirit. It was in the virtue of this Spirit that he returned into Galilee, to bear thither the light of the Gospel. It was this spirit animated his zeal, and led him through the country, to shed thereon that heavenly fire of which he says: "I am come to cast fire on the earth, and what will I but that it be kindled." (*Luke*, xii. 49.) This Divine Spirit endued his words with such power, that his enemies were constrained to acknowledge, that never had man so spoken. In fine, in the spirit of God he wrought so many miracles, to satisfy the tenderness of his own heart, by healing spiritual and corporal maladies. Behold the model of true zeal; it must act by the virtue of the spirit, according to these words of the apostle: "And my speech and my preaching was not in the persuasive words of human wisdom, but in showing of the spirit and power. That your faith might not stand on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God. For I judged not myself

know anything among you, but Jesus Christ, and him crucified." (1 *Cor.* ii. 4, 5.) O divine science! to know Jesus Christ crucified, to love, to imitate him! Happy he that loves; infinitely happy he that resembles this divine model.

WEDNESDAY.

On the miraculous draught of fish.

1st Point. Consider—"And it came to pass, that when the multitudes pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Genesareth." (*Luke*, v. 1.) Contemplate the humility of the Son of God, in conversing thus familiarly with the poor and simple, supporting their importunity, without any regard either to his own greatness or their lowliness. When they press on him in crowds to hear the word of God, he is not offended at their irreverence. It is not the great ones of the world who compose the crowd that listen to this divine preacher, they would be ashamed to appear devout; it is not the wise of this world, they are too learned; the science of salvation is only for the simple; it is not the rich, they have other cares and occupations. It is the poor, the sick, the afflicted, who surround and press upon him, having more regard to his goodness than his greatness, as St. Bonaventure observes. Is this the Lord of majesty, the God of terrors, who heretofore spoke amid thunders and lightning; the God of armies, who appointed bounds to the Israelites, and rendered inaccessible the mountain of Sinai, on which he descended? Yes, he is the same God; but hitherto a just and terrible God! now a God of meekness and benignity, in whose sight the poor and simple are more pleasing than the mighty ones of the earth. O humility of my Saviour, how thou confoundest my pride.

2nd Point. Consider—"And going up into one of the ships that was Simon's, he desired him to draw back a little from the land. And sitting, he taught the multitudes out of the ship." (*Luke*, v. 3.) "We pray and beseech you in the Lord Jesus Christ." (*Thes.* iv. 1.) Such is the language of the saints, knowing that the human heart is jealous of its liberty, and more easily led by sweetness than compelled by force. In this they follow the example of Jesus Christ. Behold, says Theophalict, the meekness with which he speaks to St. Peter, entreating, not commanding, as was his right to do. Admirable teacher of humility, who begins his lesson by the practice of the virtue! "He desired him." What! the Lord entreats his slave; the master becomes a suppliant; and God, to whom all honour is due, respects his creature. Yet the sinner, who is nothingness, would domineer, treating inferiors with contempt, equals with arrogance, superiors without respect, and God himself without reverence! What blindness! Vain and insolent being, though nothing, you affect a false greatness; you can do nothing, yet you would domineer; you know not how to obey, yet you would command. Dust and ashes! sink into your native vileness! Miserable creature! remember your origin: you are nothing; rest in your proper place.

3rd Point. Consider—"And sitting, he taught the multitude out of the ship." From the sweetness and humility which Jesus Christ manifests on this occasion, learn not to seek your own honour in serving your neighbour, but only the glory of God, in which should be forgotten all human respects, neither being repelled by contempt nor elated by success. From the example of the multitude, learn to love and tenderly cherish the Word of the eternal Father, the Incarnate Word; but endeavour to approach him with more respect. The greater condescension he manifests towards you, the greater should be your reverence for his sacred person.

His familiarity should ever increase your esteem, love, and respect. Do you desire to profit by his discourse, and enjoy the sweetness of his conversation? Become a little one, for it is with the humble and the lowly he willingly entertains himself. Listen to him in a spirit of simplicity, adoration, sacrifice, and praise; not of curiosity and human reasoning; annihilating the pride and natural vivacity of the mind, before the truth and power of Jesus, who speaks to you from the barque of Peter, that is, from his holy Church; and from the place of his repose, that is, the most Holy Sacrament, which is the throne of his love. Examine with what reverence you approach him, with what attention you listen, and with what fidelity you execute that which he inspires.

THURSDAY.

On the humility exercised by St. Peter.

1st POINT. Consider—"Now when he had ceased to speak, he said to Simon: Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a draught." (*Luke*, v. 4.) The first act of humility St. Peter exercises on this occasion, is a perfect submission. He is desired "to draw back a little from the land." (*Luke*, v. 3.) Unless you remove from your heart the desire of esteem, of honours, or pleasures, Jesus Christ will not enter; he cannot dwell there, whilst you still entertain an affection for terrestrial objects. In proportion as you disengage yourself from creatures, you will be united with God: then he will repose in your heart, and instruct you in his heavenly secrets. "Launch out into the deep." Thus our Lord treats souls that are perfectly submissive. He leads them by a continual progress to the highest point of perfection. You are all ardour in the pursuit

of that which is only temporal, yet cold and remiss in seeking your spiritual good. If you shed a tear, or feel a passing sentiment of devotion, you think you have done much, but Jesus Christ is not satisfied. If you are obedient to his inspirations, he will whisper: "Launch into the deep." Be not content with ordinary virtue; aim at those heroic acts that glorify me, and augment your own merits. If you are faithful in action, he will be munificent to you in prayer. Afterwards he will lead you "into the deep," that is, sufferings and humiliations, interior and exterior. Then "let down your nets." It suffices not to sanctify yourself by prayer, mortification, and the cross; you must employ your prayers, labours, and talents, in drawing souls to God.

2nd Point. Consider—"And Simon answering, said to him: Master, we have laboured all night, and have taken nothing." (*Luke*, v. 6.) The second act of humility on the part of St. Peter, is an acknowledgment of his own incapacity. May we not say, with St. Peter: "We have laboured all night, and have taken nothing." For what have you hitherto taken? A little esteem, honour, or pleasure. You say, that you only desire to make progress in the service of God, but that all your efforts have been fruitless. Why? Because you labour in the night, in the absence of Jesus Christ. There is a night of trial, which is an effect of his love, by which he purifies and grounds a soul in humility by the experience of her own weakness. During this painful exercise, she should suffer with patience, and await the divine succour. There is also a night of justice, in which God chastises the infidelity of a soul rebellious to his lights and insensible to his grace, not for her destruction, but that she may enter into herself by the privation of his consolations. He leaves her in her natural weakness, and she feels the sterility and fruitlessness of her own efforts. How weak the soul

that is not sustained by the Omnipotent! Let her have recourse to Jesus Christ, and humbling herself before him, invoke his mercy without being wearied by his delay. For if he delay, it shall not be for ever: sooner or later he will bend to the prayer of a soul that humbles herself, and confesses her own misery.

3rd Point. Consider—"But at thy word I will let down the net." (*Luke.* v. 5.) The third act practised by St. Peter on this occasion, is an entire confidence in the assistance of grace, relying not on his own exertion, but on the word of his divine Master. He neither represents his fatigue, nor urges that the night was a time better suited for taking fish. He submits his judgment and his will to that of Jesus Christ, and animated with a holy confidence, he casts his nets the moment he has received the command. The virtue of humility, far from debasing the mind, on the contrary, elevates it by a noble confidence in God, and abandonment to his divine providence. A soul that is humble expects all from God, nothing from herself. Hence she submits to his guidance, and obeys promptly and generously in matters of difficulty and moment, as well as in the most trifling and unimportant. She considers only the authority of Jesus Christ, confiding in the power of Him who is the support of her weakness, and seeking only the accomplishment of his sacred will. This prevents her not from applying to all that is requisite to co-operate faithfully with his designs. Thus should you fulfil all that obedience enjoins, executing the will of God without examination or reply, saying with tender confidence, Lord, it is not by my own efforts I expect to succeed, but by thy holy benediction, and the virtue of thy divine word.

To thee I raise my eyes, to thee I consecrate all my thoughts and affections. For thou alone art the object of my affections; thou alone canst fill a heart created for thyself.

FRIDAY.

On the humility and love of St. Peter.

1st Point. Consider—"Which when Simon Peter saw, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying: Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." (*Luke*, v. 8.) St. Peter entreats his divine Master to depart, and at the same moment embraces his sacred feet. The apparent contradiction between his words and the action accompanying them, proceeds from the sentiments of humility and love that arise simultaneously in his heart. In a transport of love he clings to the sacred person of his Master, for love endures not separation from its object; whilst profoundly humbled, and overwhelmed with the infinite power and greatness of Him in whose presence he stands, he beseeches him to "depart," as if he would say, Lord, the disproportion between thy immensity and my nothingness renders me unworthy of thy presence. Dwell thou in thy own infinitude, and let me, by my returning to my original nothing, do homage to the sovereignty of thy self-existent being. Such should be the sentiments of the true disciples of Jesus Christ, especially in time of prayer and holy communion. His sweetness and clemency should elicit their tenderest affections, whilst his greatness inspires them with the profoundest awe.

2nd Point. Consider—"For he was wholly astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken." (*Luke*, v. 9.) The power of Jesus Christ, the magnitude of the favour conferred, and his own unworthiness, impress the apostle with a reverential fear. In this sentiment all the faithful servants of God participate. The consideration of his power makes them fear his displeasure; his infinite benefits, far from exciting vain esteem, or criminal self-complacency, hold them in continual apprehension of

the rigorous account they must render. Whilst the consciousness of their own unworthiness to receive, their ingratitude in acknowledging, and infidelity in corresponding with these graces, cause them to exclaim with trembling: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." What is man but nothing? What is a sinful man, but a criminal and malicious nothing? As nothing, he is unworthy of all good; as a wicked and criminal nothing, he is deserving of all evils and everlasting death. "And Jesus said to Simon: Fear not: from henceforth thou shalt catch men." (*Luke*, v. 10.) He that is truly humble, and who loves Jesus Christ, fears only sin; but this fear troubles not the peace of his soul, because God is the centre of his repose, as his heart is the throne of God's rest. In this sanctuary the divine mercy treats familiarly with him, enlivens and inflames him with love, enriches him with the abundance of his gifts, and enlivens his confidence, saying: "Fear not."

3rd Point. Consider—"I am a sinful man." There is no appellation so suitable to man as that of sinner. The titles of rich, noble, powerful, are exterior. Those of holy, virtuous, wise, patient, are interior, but belong not to man. Sin alone properly belongs to him. Each one must confess, "I am a sinful man." What have you been? What are you? What shall you be? A sinner even until death. Let this thought continually humble and confound you in the presence of God. Thus St Peter abases himself, assuming the quality of a sinner, whilst the love of Jesus elevates him to an intimate union with his Master, who calls him to the conquest of souls. An humble soul is so pleasing to God, that he gives it possession of all his treasures, associates it to all his designs, and confides to it that which he holds most dear: his own glory and the salvation of souls. St. Peter, when humbled at the feet of the Son of God, consecrates himself entirely to his service, and

becomes capable of converting the entire world. He is the humble servant of Jesus Christ, who, as an instrument, receives movement and direction from his hand. A single missionary grounded in the contempt of himself, and sustained by solid humility, is more useful for gaining souls than a thousand others, because he acts not merely as man, but in union with the spirit of God. Hence his prayers are efficacious, his words persuasive, his example powerful, and his entire conduct holy.

SATURDAY.

On the vocation of the Apostles.

1st Point. Consider—"And he said to them: Come ye after me, and I will make you to be fishers of men." (*Matt.* iv. 19). The Son of God calls poor fishermen to his service, and to the conquest of the world. He establishes them founders of his Church, and fathers of a chosen people, by a prerogative more wonderful than that of Abraham, to whom was said: "I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee and magnify thy name, and thou shalt be blessed." (*Gen* xii. 2.) How glorious the vocation of the apostles! to what a dignity are they exalted! What benefits dispensed through their ministry to all the nations of the earth! "To me thy friends, O God, are made exceedingly honourable: their principality is exceedingly strengthened." (*Ps.* cxxxviii. 17.) "The Lord maketh poor and maketh rich, he humbleth and he exalteth. He raiseth up the needy from the dust, and lifteth up the poor from the dunghill: that he may sit with princes, and hold the throne of glory." (*Kings*, ii. 7, 8.) How weak is human wisdom, how limited its view! Man sees but the surface, God penetrates the secrets of the heart, and thence judges of those that belong to him.

and are proper for his designs. He sees poor fisher men, and beholding their interior dispositions, he destines them for the conversion of the world, he chooses them for the companions of his labours, and gathers through them the fruits of the cross.

2nd Point. Consider—"And he saith to them: Come ye after me." Thus he daily addresses you, calling you to the practice of charity, patience, humility, and all the virtues that form saints. It was this invitation animated the martyrs to follow their Lord to Calvary, and the death of the cross. When he calls apostolic men, he requires only that of which he has given an example, and if they walk in the traces of his humility and poverty, he will give all that is necessary for the re-establishment of his empire. Seek, he says, the kingdom of God, and all things shall be given you. Fear not the persecution of the wicked. The disciple is not greater than his master, nor the slave than his lord. If they have persecuted the master, will they not persecute the servants? But fear them not. Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes, and salute no man by the way. Who could speak thus, but he that feeds the birds of the air, and clothes the flowers with their beauty. He that refuses to follow such a Master, or abandon himself to his divine providence, is distrustful of his power and goodness; knows not who he is, or the right he possesses over all creatures.

Command, O Lord, my soul to follow thee. What fearest thou, O my soul? It is God that calls.

3rd Point. Consider—"And they immediately leaving their nets, followed him" (*Matt.* iv. 20) These obey promptly, and correspond with fidelity to their vocation. Hence you learn that to follow Jesus Christ, it suffices not to renounce sin, you must also detach yourself from the perishable things of this world; that is to say, the honours, pleasures, and conveniences of life. The greater man's possessions, says St. Chrysos

tom, the more he is enslaved; being fettered by stronger chains, which prevent him from following the author of his salvation. There is no one so free, and consequently so happy, as he who is attached to Jesus Christ alone. Reflect on the vocation of St. Peter, and the miraculous draught of fish preceding it, and admire the power of that secret grace by which Jesus Christ, attracts all hearts to himself. The draught taken by St. Peter was miraculous! But the word of Jesus Christ to the disciple was still more stupendous; for by it he is raised to the dignity of the apostleship, endued with true liberty of spirit, divine love, and all that can render man happy for eternity. Thus it is more honourable to be the servant of Jesus Christ, than master of the universe. Nevertheless, blind as we are, we remain in our barque, we are attached to our nets, we love our chains, which will draw us into eternal misery, unless we break them either by violence, or the power of divine love.

Amiable and adorable Master, never suffer me to quit thy divine service, or to resemble those ungrateful souls, who, forgetting the homage due to thee, become slaves of as many masters as they have passions that tyrannize over the soul. Let me be as him that "shall subscribe with his hand to the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel." (*Isaiah*, xliv. 5.)

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

On Jesus delivering a Demoniac.

1st Point. Consider—"And in the synagogue there was a man who had an unclean devil, and he cried out with a loud voice, saying: Let us alone, what have we to do with thee, Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy

One of God." (*Luke*, iv. 33, 34.) The insolent demand of the proud spirit receives no other answer than the menaces he has deserved. An invincible obstinacy in evil, has placed between God and the reproved spirit an impenetrable wall of separation, which the fires of hell cannot destroy, nor eternity remove. Let your petition to Jesus Christ be, to discover to you that which prevents your intimate union with him, and menaces an eternal separation. This demand would not be unprofitable, if, with the aid of his grace, you endeavoured to remove the impediment. Examine your interior; you will there discover a fund of self-love, self-judgment, and self-will, which the spirit of God alone can regulate and subject to his empire. You will discover innumerable sins, but the precious blood of your Saviour can efface the sins of a thousand worlds. You will discover an excess of misery, but the unbounded mercy of God supplies a remedy for all. Therefore implore this grace of your Lord. Beseech him to take away all that would separate your soul from him, beseech him to be to you a Jesus during life, in the hour of death, and for all eternity.

2nd Point. Consider—"Art thou come to destroy us?" The evil spirit fears being banished with his companions, from the temples and idols wherein they were adored, and whence they delivered their false oracles. He fears the destruction of his empire, and our deliverance from his tyranny. He dreads the restriction of his power over us, because his happiness is found in our ruin. Blind that we are, we cannot be persuaded that his suggestions are the voice of our enemy; on the contrary, we listen with pleasure, and follow his pernicious counsels with as much ardour as if he were our greatest friend. Jesus Christ has not entered into the world to destroy the demons, for they have wrought their own destruction; or to save them, *for out of hell there is no redemption.* But he is come

to destroy sin, which is their work, to overthrow the tyrannical empire they had usurped over men, and restore us to the liberty of the children of God. How great our obligation to the mercy that has saved us, preferably to those once bright but now fallen spirits. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven. Is it not just that we should give ourselves entirely to him, who hath given himself wholly to us?

3rd Point. Consider—"I know who thou art, the Holy One of God." If the evil spirit knows the Son of God, his knowledge cannot render him more happy, but only serves to increase his misery; for he knows him only by the experience of his power, and of his avenging justice; he knows him as an inflexible judge who punishes, an irreconcilable enemy that unrelentingly pursues, and an avenging God who confounds him by the weight of his wrath. In fine, he says he knows, but he cannot say he loves; and this is the source of his misfortune. For charity is extinguished in the pride of this fallen spirit, who can now burn with no other flame than that of eternal torments. You should never desire the light of knowledge without the ardour of love, nor that of science without the counterpoise of humility. It will avail little to say: "I know thee," unless you can also say: I love, I adore thee, and submit myself entirely to your divine will.

O Holy of Holies, receive the tribute of honour which I render thee as my God in the knowledge of thy greatness, and as my Saviour in the contemplation of thy humiliations and abjection. I adore thee with no less respect on the cross than on thy seat of royalty; and if prostrate before the throne of thy glory, I say, "Holy, holy, holy," I say with equal love, beholding thee on the cross, "Thou alone art holy," even upon Calvary, "Thou alone art sovereign Lord" of the universe, even upon the cross, "Thou

alone art most high," even upon the gibbet, the seat of infamy and scorn.

MONDAY.

On Jesus banishing the unclean spirit.

1st Point. Consider—"And Jesus rebuked him, saying: Hold thy peace, and go out of him." (*Luke*, iv. 35.) The Son of God imposes silence on the demon, teaching you to distrust the artifice by which he insinuates his pernicious maxims and evil counsels, into truths the most important for salvation. For as he loves falsehood, and bears you a mortal hatred, he never speaks truth but as a snare for your destruction. Again, in commanding the evil spirit to *hold his peace*, your divine Master instructs you to silence those flatterers, and false prophets, who artfully instil the poison of praise, or assume the language of piety, only to deceive you, and gain their private ends. Far from imitating Jesus Christ in rejecting merited praise, you gladly listen to that which is false, and instead of saying to the deceiver, "Be silent, such discourse is offensive," you say in heart and will, "Add still greater adulation," so agreeable to your pride is the vain applause of creatures.

2nd Point. Consider—"And when the devil had thrown him into the midst, he went out of him, and hurt him not at all." (*Luke*, iv. 35.) No sooner has the Son of God commanded the evil spirit to go out of the man, than he is constrained to fly and quit his prey. Reflect on the power of Jesus Christ, who with one word constrains the impure spirit to go forth. Your soul is much more rebellious to his will; he expels the demon with one word; yet how often has he spoken to your heart without bending its obstinacy or vanquish-

ing its resistance? However great the misfortune of this demoniac, the possession of the body is much less to be feared than that of the soul. The evil spirit torments this man with redoubled fury when forced to quit him, yet notwithstanding all his efforts he is not permitted to inflict any injury. This demonstrates that your evil habits and inordinate affections never cause so much pain as when you are about to overcome them. But be not discouraged; Satan redoubles his efforts when you endeavour to drive him forth. Be not afraid; he can injure only tepid souls that make no resistance. Have recourse to the Son of God, and beseech him to command your vices and all your spiritual enemies to depart from you. Beseech him to banish self-love from your heart, that charity may take possession thereof. And pray him to renew a right spirit within you.

3rd Point. Consider—"And there came fear upon all, and they talked among themselves, saying: What Word is this; for with authority and power he commanded the unclean spirits, and they go out?" (*Luke*, iv. 36.) How important this demand! Would you know "what word is this" under which all bend submissive? It is the Eternal Word, the increated Word, the Word that proceeds from the bosom of the Father, the infinite, incomprehensible, ineffable Word, which must be adored in silence. It is the Word Incarnate in the womb of the Blessed Virgin, that manifested himself to our souls, conversing with us, and speaking our language, to the end we might speak and understand his. It is the secret Word of love which penetrates the heart, and is understood by the soul that is humble, interior, and which abides in tranquillity and peace. This Word speaks with authority, as having power to penetrate and touch hearts, making thereon a lasting impression. Beseech him to enter into yours, and imprint therein his pure love, a hatred of yourself, and detachment from all creatures.

TUESDAY.

On Jesus curing St. Peter's mother-in-law.

1st Point. Consider—"And Jesus rising up out of the synagogue, went into Simon's house. And Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever, and they besought him for her." (*John*, iv. 38.) The corporal malady of this woman is an image of the spiritual one under which your soul labours. Passion produces in the soul a spiritual fever, which continually weakens, and at length destroys charity, the life of the soul. This fever causes an insatiable thirst after temporal goods, which the whole world suffices not to quench. It destroys the relish of heavenly things. "Their soul abhorred all manner of meat: and they drew nigh even to the gates of death." (*Ps.* cvi. 18.) For he who loathes spiritual exercises, is truly nigh unto death. This fever dries up the interior unction of charity; deprives the soul of supernatural strength and vigour, reducing it to such a state of langour and tepidity as is sufficient to cause its utter destruction. In fine, it causes disquietude and restlessness of spirit, which can find repose neither in creatures, because they give it not, nor in God, because such a soul is unworthy to enjoy that mystic sleep which his infinite goodness imparts to those who love and are reciprocally loved by him. Examine in what degree your soul is infected with this fever. Are you sensible of its malignancy, or on the contrary, do you nourish it to the imminent danger of your salvation?

2nd Point. Consider—"And standing over her, he commanded the fever, and it left her." (*Luke*, iv. 39.) This miraculous cure is a figure of the grace which Jesus Christ imparts when he enters your soul in the holy Communion, or by interior inspirations, re-establishing your spiritual health, regulating your passions,

and deadening the fire of concupiscence. Reflect on the circumstances of the miracle. The Son of God, at the prayer of the disciples, approaches the sick person. The infinite mercy of Jesus Christ leads him in the same condescending manner to succour your necessities. His infinite greatness descends unto your nothingness. "He commanded the fever and it left her." Beseech him to extend this mercy by delivering you from the violence of your spiritual maladies. He commands the fever, and it obeys. Yet, how often do you resist this Sovereign Lord, and refuse to bear the sweet yoke of his law. When will you abandon yourself unreservedly to God, and cease to oppose the designs of his providence? When will you receive with equanimity all the dispensations of his fatherly hand? For the hand that strikes is directed by the hand of a God, who tenderly loves, and as ardently desires your love in return.

3rd Point. Consider—"And immediately rising she ministered to them." (*Luke*, iv. 38.) This pious woman turns to good account the benefit received. At the same moment that Jesus Christ restores her corporal health, he imprints in her soul a deep humility and fervour. This fervour appears in her rising *immediately*, and this humility in *ministering to them.* Humility is a characteristic of the spirit of Jesus Christ; his most cherished virtue, which he has exercised in all the actions of his life. He came not to be served, but to serve; in order to confound your pride, who would be independent of, and served by all. The spirit of Jesus Christ is also a spirit of love and fervour, that impels the soul ardently to follow his secret inspirations, whether it be to act, to suffer, or to die. If he lead to action, it is with diligence, but without disquietude or impetuosity. If he call to the cross, he has traced in his blood the path to Calvary. If he attract to contemplation, hasten to enter into this repose, which is re-

served for the people of God. Finally, learn from the example of this devout woman, not to spare yourself in the service of Jesus Christ. But in order to serve him well, you must be healed of all your spiritual infirmities. Beseech the Son of God to deliver you from your many defects, and give you grace to enter upon his service with renewed fervour.

WEDNESDAY.

On Jesus healing the sick.

1st Point. Consider—"And when the sun was down, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them to him. But he laying his hands on every one of them, healed them." (*Luke*, iv. 40.) The design of Almighty God in sending sickness, is to draw from the infirmity of the body the health of the soul. In order to return to God by a true conversion, it is necessary that the sinner enter into himself, and penetrate the folds of his conscience, that he may discover its wounds. Whilst in health the sinner is so dissipated by exterior objects, that he cannot discover the interior disorder of his soul; and his pride rejects the admonitions of charity. But cast down by pain and sickness he begins to discover how vile and contemptible is the body, hitherto so cherished; he becomes more humble and tractable, consequently better disposed to receive the lights of heaven, and the charitable remonstrances of those who govern his soul. Let the sinner who violates without remorse the commandments of his God, reflect on this; and entering into himself, be confounded in the divine presence. "Hear me, O ye hard-hearted, who are far from justice. I have brought my justice near, it shall not be far off: and my salvation shall not tarry. I will give salvation in Sion, and my glory in Israel" (*Isaiah*, xlvi. 11, 12.)

2nd Point. Consider—in order to facilitate the return of a sinner to God, his mind must be stricken with fear, which gives entrance to hope, to sorrow, and love. Such in short is the progress of penitence. The sinner entering into himself, is impressed with fear of the divine judgments; then he is encouraged to hope in the mercy of God; thence he passes to sorrow for sin, and by sorrow he is elevated to the exercise of divine love. During health the sentiments of fear are lost in the expectation of long life, and forgetfulness of eternity. The remembrance of death makes but a weak impression when viewed as a remote evil. But when extended on the bed of sickness, weak, exhausted, and overwhelmed with pain, then the sinner remembers that he is mortal; and beholding the awful passage to eternity which hitherto he had concealed from himself, he is seized with terror at the sight of his danger. Thus the divine mercy leads him back to his service. Who can tell the number of those who, abandoned to pleasure, and plunged in crime, have been condemned to eternal misery by the abuse of health, or how many would have attained eternal happiness, had they profited by the merciful visitation of corporal sufferings!

3rd Point. Consider—the Son of God, the physician of souls, strikes the flesh in order to heal the spirit. Should you not love the hand that inflicts so salutary a wound? Complain not of this apparent rigour: he seeks not your death but your conversion. It is not a mark of anger, but rather a signal effect of love. If he strikes the body, it is to purify the spirit: in fine, if he casts you down by a grievous malady, if he deprives you of health and strength, in order to withdraw you from those dangerous amusements, to enjoy which you risk your eternal salvation, it is only that he may raise you up to a new life, a life of virtue and perfection. Consider attentively these words: "And passing by thee, I saw that thou wast trodden under foot in thy

own blood: and I said to thee when thou wast in thy blood: Live." (*Ezechiel*, xvi. 6.) You know that divine justice holds the keys of the abyss, into which he can plunge you at his will: now that death is about to cut the thread by which you are suspended over the precipice, is it not time to recognize the hand that holds it, and cry out for mercy? Of what avail are friends, fortune, or power, at the hour of death? Can they wrest you from the hand of eternal justice? Sound the depths of your conscience, and when you discover the number of your offences, remorse and sorrow will undoubtedly lead you to an efficacious repentance.

THURSDAY.

On Jesus healing the Sick, continued.

1st Point. Consider—"And all that were sick he healed." (*Matt.* viii. 16.) Corporal maladies are not less efficacious for the improvement of virtue, than the destruction of vice; they make not only penitents but saints. The Holy Fathers teach that sickness is the school of Christian wisdom, the element of virtue, where the spirit gains new vigour; the medium of grace, which is redoubled by the weakness of nature. The strength of the soul is in Jesus Christ; his virtue is in the cross; and the cross of Jesus Christ is found in sickness. Why then regret the loss of corporal strength, since on your infirmities is elevated the standard of the cross? You are encountered by three dangerous enemies: the world assails you from without, the devil attacks you within, the flesh furnishes weapons to combat against you. But sickness, in afflicting the body, divides and diminishes your enemies. It is a general defeat of all the vices; the victory of grace over all the passions, and the triumph of the soul over the appetites

of the flesh. Therefore you should receive corporal infirmities as no less a gift from God than health; complain not of the sufferings, nor be weary of the langour you endure, since they afford a most favourable opportunity of advancing in solid virtue.

2nd Point. Consider—sickness, far from being an impediment, contributes much to advancement in perfection. Daily examples afford convincing proof, that habitual infirmity is a silent exhortation to prayer, compunction, and other virtues. In health the mind is dissipated by various occupations. If you speak of prayer to persons engaged in the world, they reply that their interminable occupations give no leisure for that important duty. But when by corporal infirmity you are made the prisoner of divine justice, you naturally turn towards your Creator, saying with David: "Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak." (*Ps.* vi. 3.) Moreover, in health the practice of humility is difficult; but sickness is a state of dependence that humbles alike the great and the lowly. In time of sickness you must obey the prescriptions of a physician, however repugnant to natural inclinations; you are entirely dependent on the care of others. Even the vicissitudes of season, of heat or cold, are often a trying inconvenience, and the near approach of death makes you sensible that you are but dust. In fine, sickness is a heavenly messenger, warning you to redeem the time misspent. And according to the admonition of the apostle, "by good works to make sure your calling and election." (*Peter*, i. 10.)

3rd Point. Consider—it is ordinarily said that sickness incapacitates the mind for any great exertion This may be true when the invalid is reduced to extremity, but does not hold good with regard to habitual infirmities. To judge by the example which the saints have left, what mind more active, what zeal more inflamed, what courage more undaunted, than that of St

Bernard, who astonished the world by his miracles, shed a new lustre on religion by his virtues, and added to the kingdom of Jesus Christ by the conquest of innumerable souls? Yet he laboured under continual infirmities. What more extreme mortification, more rigorous austerity, more severe and unremitting penance, than that of St. Francis! he was nevertheless subject to habitual maladies, which he called his companions, and which he cherished so tenderly, as to complain with many tears when God would have delivered him from those sufferings. St. Servilus bore the cross of sickness from infancy. He suffered from a general paralysis, so that of all his members, none seemed free but the movement of his heart to love, and of his tongue to bless God. Yet he lived the life of an angel, and died the death of the saints. What will you say on the day of judgment, when you shall behold this paralytic, who, though deprived of his corporal faculties, has attained a high reward for his exalted virtues?

FRIDAY.

On Jesus retiring to a desert place.

1st Point. Consider—"And rising very early, going out he went into a desert place: and there he prayed." (*Mark*, i. 35.) The Son of God retires secretly into the desert to teach you to fly the vain applause of men, when you have performed any action worthy of admiration, and in solitude to give thanks to God through whom it has been accomplished. The Son of God, although enjoying the beatific vision, and incapable of distraction, seeks a retired place for prayer; and you, whose heart is so dissipated, fear not to expose yourself to occasions that increase the natural levity of mind. He rises early in the morning, instructing you to con-

secrate the first fruits of the day to God. Of the wise man it is said: "He will give his heart to resort early to the Lord that made him." (*Eccles.* xxxix. 6.) He commences and terminates the day by prayer. Prayer is the salt with which all his actions are seasoned. To other actions you should apply with moderation, lest your heart be entangled by sensible objects. But you must give yourself entirely to prayer, which is the same as to consecrate yourself to God, to whom you are united in prayer. What greater happiness than to imitate the angelic choir, to sing hymns and canticles in honour of your Creator; and when called to daily occupations, let prayer accompany and season all your actions.

2nd Point. Consider—"And Simon and they that were with him, followed after him. And when they had found him, they said to him: All seek for thee." (*Mark* i. 36, 37.) How admirable the zeal of the apostle. He seeks the Son of God, not so much for his own consolation, as for the satisfaction of the people who also sought him. Why are you not animated with a like charity for your brethren? You think only on gratifying your own desires; and as you secretly seek yourself in all things, you find yourself in all, but, it is to be feared only to your own confusion. Reflect attentively on these words: "All seek for thee." What a happiness for you to seek but God alone! There are many who seek Jesus from interested motives, but few who seek him purely for his own sake. How do you seek him? Truly there are few who seek with sincerity the honour of God; but you must be of that few, if you would be of the number of the elect. What more glorious than to seek, with a pure intention, the glory of God! What a glory for you to seek faithfully the great end which the Son of God himself sought during his whole life,—he in whose name "every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth. And every tongue confess that the

Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father." (*Phil.* ii. 10, 11.) He is in the glory of the Father, because he sought not his own. You shall be there with him, if you can say with him: "I seek not my own glory."

3rd POINT. Consider—"And the multitudes sought him, and came unto him: and they stayed him, that he should not depart from them." (*Luke* iv. 42.) This also should be the end of all your desires, the object of all your prayers: "My God, depart not from me." (*Ps.* xxi. 12.) "And unto old age and grey hairs, O God, forsake me not." (*Ps.* lxx. 18.) What is the reply of the Son of God to the multitudes: "To other cities also I must preach the kingdom of God: for therefore am I sent." (*Luke*, iv. 43.) Adore with respect the judgments of God, who sometimes withdraws from those who seek him, and the more earnest their desire to detain, the more he seems to withdraw; thus exercising their virtue and proving their fidelity. Reflect also on the tender charity of Christ, and the care with which he instructs and enlightens all. "And he said to them: Let us go into the neighbouring towns and cities, that I may preach there also: for this purpose am I come." (*Mark*, i. 38.) Blessed is the man whom thou shalt instruct, O Lord, and shall teach him out of thy law. (*Ps.* xciii. 12.) Beseech him to enlighten and teach you the path to heaven; but beware that your heart reject not his inspirations, or become deaf to counsels of the incarnate wisdom.

SATURDAY.

On three who offered themselves to follow Jesus Christ.

1st POINT. Consider—"And Jesus, seeing great multitudes about him, gave orders to pass over the

water. And a certain scribe came and said to him: Master, I will go with thee whithersoever thou shalt go." (*Matt.* viii. 18, 19.) It is a doctor of the law who offers himself to follow Jesus Christ. But as he loves honours and riches, he cannot relish the reply of the Son of God: "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air nests: but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head." (*Matt.* viii. 20). These words would have sufficed to enlighten the mind and inflame the heart of this scribe, had he been well disposed. But on the contrary, he refuses to follow Jesus in his poverty, not understanding the spiritual riches and solid glory that are concealed under humility and evangelic poverty. He is rich, who having nothing of his own, possesses all things in God. Jesus Christ declares openly that he is poor, although he is Lord of all; and he will not suffer any to follow him from motives of temporal interest. As his dominion is eternal, it befits his greatness to bestow on his followers the goods that are eternal. Therefore, if you desire to follow him, look not for temporal recompense. Jesus Christ, himself, is the only possession of his servants. He has no superfluity, he is even destitute of necessaries. He is content with your heart: shall not the possession of his satisfy your desires?

2nd Point. Consider— "But he said to another: Follow me. And he said: Lord, suffer me first to go and to bury my father." (*Luke*, iv. 59.) The inordinate sentiments of nature are, in this instance, an impediment to the grace that accompanies the invitation of the Redeemer. The delay, according to human reason, seems just, but it is not conformable to the evangelic maxims. It suffices not that what you propose is good, you must further inquire, whether it be according to the will of God. Hear how the Son of God rejects the ill-grounded excuse: "Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God." (*Luke*,

ix. 60.) Thus he instructs you to convert all carnal affection for your kindred into that which is spiritual. Jesus Christ, as St. Chrysologus observes, does not censure the duties of piety, but if natural affection prevent your obeying the divine call, he requires you to prefer the Creator to the creature. "Let the dead bury their dead" There are three descriptions of dead who bury their dead. The first are those who bury their sins, by concealing them in confession. The second, those who correct not their subjects, for whom they are responsible, but connive at their faults through human considerations. The last are those who flatter sinners in their disorders. The servants of Jesus Christ are far removed from these excesses. Their occupation is not to bury the dead, but to labour for their resuscitation. To them are addressed the words—"Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God." That is, leave them to bury the body, but let your care be to resuscitate the soul.

3rd Point. Consider—"And another said: I will follow thee, Lord, but let me first take my leave of them that are at my house." (*Luke*, ix. 60.) This man, not awaiting the actual declaration of the will of Jesus Christ, follows the interior attraction of his divine service; only asking permission to take leave of his friends. Nevertheless, the Son of God finds him not sufficiently detached from those terrestrial objects to which his heart still recurred. "Jesus said to him: No man putting his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." (*Luke*, ix. 62.) The new disciple, terrified at the unremitting fervour required of the followers of Jesus Christ, loses by pusillanimity the fruit of his good desires. You are hereby instructed not to trifle with grace, and that the Holy Ghost is an enemy to excuses and delays. "No man putting his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." Your life, Christian soul, is a jour

ney towards eternity. The future awaits you, the present is passing by: why then permit it to arrest your course? If you aspire to a heavenly dwelling, why *look back* to earth? The Son of God admonishes this disciple not to take counsel of his friends, because ordinarily they are opposed to such good designs: nor of his passions, because they darken the mind. Unhappy the soul who, receiving the impressions of divine grace, *looks back* to the world! for it is impossible to unite the service of the Creator with an affection for the creature.

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

On Jesus appeasing the tempest.

1st POINT. Consider—"And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that the ship was filled." (*Mark*, iv. 37.) This tempest is not fortuitous; it is designed by Providence for your instruction. In the first place, you learn that although you are assured of the presence of Jesus Christ in your heart, you are not secure from danger so long as you are on the stormy sea of this world. Frequently the tempest arises when least expected; scruples, temptations, interior pains and fears, rise suddenly as a tempest, or as the waves of the sea. Secondly, you are instructed to watch during the tempest; but without disquietude or fear, as if Jesus Christ had abandoned you. "The Lord is thy keeper, the Lord is thy protection upon thy right hand." (*Ps.* cxx. 5.) "When thou shalt pass through the waters, I will be with thee, and the rivers shall not cover thee: when thou shalt walk in the fire thou shalt not be burnt, and the flames shall not burn thee; for I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour." (*Isaiah*, xliii. 2.) God is

our refuge and our strength, says David; let us not fear, though the waves of the sea arise, and the mountains are shaken by their violence. Fear not the malice of the demon, nor let the persecution of man abate your courage; but trust in the aid of the Most High.

2nd POINT. Consider—"And he was in the hinder part of the ship sleeping upon a pillow." (*Mark*, iv. 38.) The tempest arises in the presence and at the command of Jesus Christ. This demonstrates that pious souls are not only afflicted by the malice of the devil who tempts, of man who persecutes, or their own misery, that frequently renders them burdensome to themselves; but that God also invisibly exercises them by the purifying influence of his love, the wisdom of his providence, the impression of his sanctity, and the laws of his justice. His love combats their self-love, of which he is the capital enemy; hence he humbles and mortifies nature in all its most secret windings. His wisdom overthrows their human prudence, destroys all their designs, and leads them by obscure ways: so that they may say with Jeremiah: "He hath set me in dark places as those that are dead for ever." (*Lam.* iii. 6.) How useful, how profitable is this trial which humbles the pride of human judgment, and enlightens its blindness, subjecting it to the spirit of God! The impression of divine sanctity withdraws souls from the commerce of the senses, depriving them of sensible consolation, in order to detach them from all that is human. But what annihilation, what privation of all that is not God, what a death to nature must be endured, before they can arrive at this happiness! If human weakness cause imperfections and defects amidst these tempests, the justice of God uniting with his sanctity, permits nothing to pass without correction, to the end that purified in this life, they may be disposed to receive the crown of glory, which infinite mercy has prepared for them from eternity.

3rd Point. Consider—"And he was in the hinder part of the ship, sleeping upon a pillow; and they awake him, and say to him: Master, doth it not concern thee that we perish?" Jesus Christ sleeps during the tempest which himself has raised; that is, according to the designs of his wisdom, he defers succouring those in affliction; whence the Psalmist deploring this delay, says in his sufferings: "Arise, why sleepest thou, O Lord? Arise, and cast us not off to the end. Why turnest thou thy face away? And forgettest our want and our trouble? For our soul is humbled to the dust. Arise, O Lord, help us and redeem us for thy name's sake." (*Ps.* liii. 23, *et seq.*) God defers your deliverance, that in the magnitude of the peril from which you are delivered, he may display the extent of his power Our Lord treats his disciples like generous soldiers whom he exercises in the combat, to prepare them for the conquest of the universe. The life of the servants of Jesus Christ is a continual exercise of patience, by which they find peace amidst the tempests of the world. Therefore preserve a pure conscience, sustained by a holy confidence in God, and "if thou sleep, thou shalt not fear; thou shalt rest, and thy sleep shall be sweet." (*Prov.* iii. 23.)

MONDAY.

On the remedies against the tempests that arise in the soul.

1st Point. Consider—"And they came to him, and awaked him, saying: Lord, save us, or we perish." (*Matt.* viii. 25.) The first remedy against the temptations, or pains, whether exterior or interior, that raise a tempest in the soul, is to know and fear the danger. You are but too sensible to temporal evils, and the loss of earthly possessions. But frequently you are igno-

rant that you risk your spiritual goods and are in danger of a melancholy shipwreck. You sometimes think you enjoy a calm, when you are nearly overwhelmed by the tempest. You sleep in the vessel while the winds drive it on the rocks, and the yawning waves are ready to bury it in the deep. Again you mistake the tempest for a favourable gale. This inordinate affection pleases; this passion seems reasonable: far from combating the temptation, you second, and increase its strength. Meanwhile you are on the brink of ruin, unless you apply an immediate remedy.

2nd Point. Consider—"Lord, save us, we perish." You must approach Jesus Christ by penance, awaken him by the remembrances of his passion, and implore his aid by fervent prayer. You must approach him by sincere sorrow for sin, with a firm purpose of amendment. St. Gregory observes that it is the last degree of folly to persevere in sin, and to expect at the same time that God would cease to take vengeance on it. You must awake Jesus Christ by the remembrance of his sufferings and labours. According to St. Augustin, he sleeps in your regard when you cease to remember him. In fine, you must implore his aid by fervent prayer. Prayer is the channel through which our Lord sheds from his sacred wounds the graces necessary for resisting sin, and supporting with patience the trials of this life. Remember that you belong to a God annihilated for sin; to a man of sorrows, who is never so well known as in the hour of affliction. Therefore the faithful soul, when deprived of his sensible presence, tenderly embraces the cross; she there finds him by sympathy with his sorrows, by the pain of the nails and thorns that wound him, and by the weight of the cross. Then animated with a lively and tender love, she addresses him in these words: "Be thou unto me a God, a protector, and a house of refuge to save me." Jesus has extended his arms on the cross, to shelter his followers

in their trials and afflictions. In the hour of suffering you stand under the shadow of the cross, where you are protected from the malignity of your enemies, and the violence of your passions.

3rd Point. Consider—"And Jesus saith to them: why are you fearful, O ye of little faith?" (*Matt.* viii. 26.) Faith and confidence in God are the virtues that render prayer omnipotent for obtaining all it implores: moreover, they so animate our courage that it becomes invincible. Therefore our Lord, in reproving the fear of his disciples, discovers in the reproach, that the cause of their trouble is no other than distrust For he calls them men of little faith, and to this he attributes their fear. They fear to perish, though in the company of Jesus Christ. They have quitted all to follow him, yet fear that his aid shall fail them in the hour of need. They have witnessed his miracles, yet tremble as if he wanted power to protect them. Is not this to want both faith and confidence? Apply these words to yourself; *man of little faith.* You know that God beholds all things, can do all things, is present in all places; yet, instead of recurring to his goodness, you murmur, you grieve excessively, you parley with temptation, and deliberate whether you shall yield. Where is your faith? your hope, patience, resignation, and fidelity? Be confounded in the presence of God, and resolve to act in the spirit of faith, even in the deepest obscurity, lest by pusillanimity you offend the Son of God. "Seek ye God, and your soul shall live. For the Lord hath heard the poor." (*Ps.* lxviii.) Blessed be the Lord the God of Israel, who alone hath done wonderful things." (*Ps.* lxxi.)

TUESDAY.

On the calm that succeeds the tempest.

1st Point. Consider—"And rising up he rebuked the wind, and said to the sea: Peace, be still. And the wind ceased; and there was made a great calm." (*Mark*, iv. 39.) The Son of God commands the winds and the sea, as a master his servant, as the Creator his creature. Others perform miracles by prayer, but he by the power of his word: others command in his name, and as the ministers of his providence, but he by his own authority. "Peace, be still." This word suffices to quell the most violent tempest. The disciples struck with awe, say one to another: "What manner of man is this, for the winds and the sea obey him?" (*Matt.* viii. 27.) With one word he appeases the tempest, yet a hundred inspirations fail to still the passions of your soul. Whence does this proceed? Because faith sleeps in your heart. The Lord, says St. Augustine, sleeps in the bark, therefore she is agitated by the waves. Your bark is your heart. If you act by faith, you remain calm amid the waves. If you are forgetful of its maxims, Jesus Christ sleeps within you; beware of shipwreck. Meanwhile lay hold on the remedy, awake the Son of God, saying: "Lord, save us, we perish." (*Matt.* viii. 25.) Then he will command the winds, and say to your heart: "Peace, be still."

2nd Point. Consider—"And the wind ceased, and there was made a great calm." Thus after the moral storm, Jesus Christ restores peace and calm to the heart of the just. He appeases the remorse of their conscience, and effaces their sins in his blood, whilst he pronounces these pacific words: "Go thy way in peace." (*Luke*, viii. 48.) He calms the inferior part of the soul by his victorious power, which subjects the

flesh to the spirit, regulates the senses, and subdues the passions to the empire of reason and grace. Then is fulfilled the prediction of Jeremiah: "I will shew them my hand and my power, and they shall know that my name is the Lord." (*Jer.* xvi. 21.) Then shall they feel the effect of the promises of God to the humbled and afflicted soul: "Jacob shall return, and be at rest, and prosper, and there shall be none to terrify him." (*Jer.* xlvi. 27.) As the sacred heart of Jesus is the sanctuary of the Divinity, when he opens to us this sacred asylum, he unites us to God himself, who resides therein; and having pacified the conscience, quelled the passions, and calmed all the powers of the soul, communicates to our hearts the graces of his own, changing thereby our misery into unspeakable happiness, according to these mystic words of Isaiah: "For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver; and for wood brass, and stones iron: and I will make thy visitation peace, and thy overseers justice. Iniquity shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction in thy borders; and salvation shall possess thy walls, and praise thy gates." (*Isaiah*, lx. 17, 18.)

3rd Point. Consider—"And there was made a great calm." The calm which the Son of God *makes* in the soul, does not always consist in a cessation of the tempest, but in an admirable equanimity of mind amidst the troubles and agitations of this life. The disciples of Jesus Christ follow their divine Master through the stormy waves of the world without losing their interior peace. According to St. Gregory Nazianzen, they resemble rocks against which the waves dash and break, but which mock the fury of the waters. Weak and imperfect souls, on the contrary, are like shells with which the tide sports without resistance. The cause of this difference exists in the good or evil state of the conscience. "A troubled conscience always forecasteth grievous things." (*Wisdom*, xvii. 10.) A guilty soul fears even the darkness that

shrouds her crimes. But the pious soul remains tranquil in adversity, because she finds Jesus Christ within her heart, and of him she cannot be deprived. Thus, the just are never troubled, for their confidence is founded, not on their own strength, but on that of the Omnipotent.

WEDNESDAY.

On Jesus delivering the demoniac in the country of the Gerasens.

1st Point. Consider—"And as he went out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the monuments a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling in the tombs, and no man now could bind him, not even with chains." (*Mark*, v. 2, 3.) In this unfortunate man, behold the figure of a soul held captive under the tyranny of the devil. She is despoiled of the garments of grace, of moral and infused virtues, and all the merit of former good works. Having wandered from God, the centre of her happiness, she finds repose neither in her own interior, since all there is in disorder, nor in creatures, who, by a just judgment, become in her regard the avengers of their Creator. She dwells amidst the tombs of impenitence and habitual sin, whence she cannot come forth, because she seeks not the divine mercy, the only resource for her obduracy. She is impelled to every crime. Neither fear nor love can restrain the violence of her passions. She breaks the chains of God's commandments, and will endure no other bonds than those with which she is enslaved by the devil. In fine, she is enraged against herself, for every sin is a mortal stroke inflicted on her own soul. How lamentable the condition of such a soul! Cast yourself at the feet of your Saviour, and beseech him

whose mercy is infinite, to deliver you from the power of the infernal usurper.

2nd Point. Consider—"And seeing Jesus afar off, he ran and adored him." (*Mark*, v. 6.) The happiness of this man at the feet of Jesus, prefigures the condition of those who live under the empire of so amiable a master. Do you also draw near to the sacred feet of your Redeemer: if your sins would make you to recoil with fear, look upon him as your Saviour, and say with the publican: "O God, be merciful to me a sinner." (*Luke*, xviii. 13.) If the fear of his judgments, and the splendour of his majesty, cause you to sink into your own nothingness, look upon him from this centre as your all, and say, with St. Francis: "My God and my all." Finally, if, during this exile, you feel remote from his presence, look upon him, from your place of banishment, on the throne of his glory, as your sovereign good, to whom your heart instinctively turns, saying with David: "To thee have I lifted up my eyes, who dwellest in heaven." (*Ps.* cxxii. 1.) "Wo is me, that my sojourning is prolonged! I have dwelt with the inhabitants of Cedar: my soul hath been long a sojourner." (*Ps.* cxix. 5, *et seq.*) This poor demoniac recovers, at the feet of Jesus Christ, his liberty, health, and tranquillity of mind. He becomes in a moment more happy than he had been miserable. From a state of slavery, he is restored to a heavenly freedom; from a wanderer, he is changed into a devoted follower of his liberator; from being furious and untractable, he becomes docile to the movements of the Spirit of God; from a state of nakedness and misery, he succeeds to one of honour and happiness, when clothed by the divine protection. Happy is the soul whose abode is at the feet of Jesus. Choose it for your asylum and the place of your repose.

3rd Point. Consider—"And all the multitude of the country of the Gerasens besought him to depart

from them, for they were taken with great fear. And he, going up into the ship, returned back again." (*Luke*, viii. 37.) This blinded people find their merited chastisement in the grant of their petitions. Our Saviour immediately departed, and he alone who had been delivered is sensible of the misfortune. "Now the man, out of whom the devils were departed, besought him that he might be with him. But Jesus sent him away, saying: Return to thy house, and tell how great things God hath done to thee. And he went through the whole city, publishing how great things Jesus had done to him." (*Luke*, viii. 38, 39.) The tender clemency of Jesus Christ rejects not the prayer of his servant, but sends him back to his house, and makes him the apostle of his country, substituting him in his own place, as the inhabitants had besought him to depart. How often have you rejected the visits of Jesus Christ, and nevertheless he is not weary of seeking an entrance into your heart. Be confounded at your ingratitude, and imitate the virtue of this man, who, though so desirous of enjoying the presence of his liberator, yet, in obedience to his divine will, relinquishes that happiness, to employ the health he has received, for the glory of God and salvation of souls.

O Lord! thy graces to me have been innumerable; but by my infidelity I have rendered them unprofitable. Hitherto I have been insensible to the grace of thy divine presence: henceforth permit me not to be separated from thee.

THURSDAY.

On Jesus healing the paralytic.

1st Point. Consider—"And again he entered into Capharnaum after some days. And it was heard that

he was in the house, and many came together, so that there was no room, no, not even at the door; and he spoke to them the word." (*Mark*, ii. 1, 2.) Admire the charity of the Son of God, who employs all the resources of his power and wisdom to gain those hearts into which he seeks an entrance. Jesus Christ, says St. Chrysologus, assumes our infirmities, that he may confer his strength on us. The Creator of all things has enclosed his immensity within the narrow limits of our nature, that he may invite by love, attract by his goodness, and persuade by the sweetness of his consolations, those whom fear would discourage, or absolute power would have alienated. The fervour of this people condemns your tepidity. Why have not you a like devotion, since you have the same attractions in the holy communion and spiritual instruction? Beseech your divine Lord to enter into your heart, and make of it his dwelling-place. Invite the heavenly host to assemble in such numbers around you, that no evil impression may find a passage into your soul. Banish thence the pride of the Pharisees, and labour perseveringly for the cure of your spiritual infirmities, that you may also, by the divine grace, become a medium of healing to the souls of your neighbours.

2nd Point. Consider—"And they came to him, bringing one sick of the palsy, who was carried by four." (*Mark*, ii. 3.) In the pitiable condition of this poor paralytic, you may trace your own spiritual miseries. You resemble him in weakness; you have neither strength nor courage to resist the slightest temptation. You can neither sustain the least attack of your invisible enemies, nor endure the most trifling pains of body or mind. You fall every moment, because you make not good use of the adorable sacrament, where alone your strength is to be found. You cannot advance a step in the path of perfection: your spiritual energies are deadened, and the lights and in-

spirations of heaven fail, because your evil customs oppose an obstacle thereto. In fine, you are deprived of heavenly consolation; you relish neither mortification, prayer, the exercise of humility, nor the exact observance of rules. How dangerous and painful is this state: where shall you seek a remedy, but in that sacrament of love which is the fountain of spiritual life and strength, the burning source and centre of charity, the support and sustenance of our mortal pilgrimage, and the remedy of our immortality?

3rd Point. Consider—"And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in, because of the multitude, they went up upon the roof, and let him down through the tiles with his bed into the midst, before Jesus." (*Luke*, v. 19.) In the good office rendered to the sick man, you discover four excellent qualities of perfect charity. It is kind and beneficent to all, but aids with peculiar alacrity the more necessitous. Charity is industrious in finding means to execute its holy enterprises. It is laborious, it embraces all, sustains all, neither shunning pain nor fatigue. In fine, charity is victorious: as it undertakes all things for the service of God with an invincible courage, it happily surmounts every obstacle that opposes its designs. Thus the poor paralytic, in virtue of the faith and charity of those that assist him, obtains health, both spiritual and corporal. Had you more love and fervour, what might you not effect, what might you not obtain from Jesus Christ? You would say with the apostle, "I can do all things in him who strengthens me." (*Phil.* iv. 13.) Cast not on others the faults that arise from your own tepidity. Say not that you may wait yet a while. The present is the time to give yourself to God, and if you delay, perhaps there will be no future time at your command. Let not human respect prevent you: think that the eye of God beholds you, and you will then despise the judgments of men. Be not dejected by

your weakness, for God is your light and your strength. "For thou lightest my lamp, O Lord: O my God, enlighten my darkness. For by thee I shall be delivered from temptation: and through my God I shall go over a wall." (*Ps.* xvii. 29, 30.)

FRIDAY.

On Jesus manifesting his divinity in healing the paralytic.

1st Point. Consider—"And Jesus seeing their faith, said to the man sick of the palsy: Be of good heart, son, thy sins are forgiven thee." (*Matt* ix. 2.) Jesus Christ proves his divinity in the cure of the paralytic by the remission of his sins. The Pharisees murmur hereat, saying: "Who can forgive sins, but only God?" (*Mark*, ii. 7.) But he proves his divine power by a miracle: "But that you may know that, the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins (he saith to the sick of the palsy), I say to thee: Arise, take up thy bed, and go into thy house." (*Mark*, ii. 11.) Reflect seriously on the clemency and meekness with which the Son of God receives sinners: "Be of good heart, son, thy sins are forgiven thee." O stupendous humility! exclaims St. Jerome—a miserable and despicable poor man, whom the priests would not deign to touch, he calls by the name of son. Our Saviour was so meek and sweet in his conversation, that he treated all men as his own children, despising none, but embracing each with paternal tenderness. Penetrate the efficacy of these words: "Thy sins are forgiven thee." Of a sinner, they make you a child of God; of a slave of Satan, an heir of heaven. Happy the soul to whom they are addressed. She may say with David: "To my hearing thou shalt give joy and gladness; and the bones that have been humbled shall rejoice." (*Ps.* l. 10.)

2nd Point. Consider—"And behold some of the scribes said within themselves: He blasphemeth. And Jesus seeing their thoughts, said: Why do you think evil in your hearts? Whether is it easier to say, Thy sins are forgiven thee; or to say, Arise and walk?" (*Matt.* ix. 3, 4, 5.) The Son of God manifests his divinity by penetrating the secrets of hearts. Thus, says St. Jerome, he proves himself God, since none else can enter into the mind of man. This he does by the same authority and the same power by which he discovers their most hidden thoughts. Learn hence, that it is in vain you conceal your sins from the eye of man, since that of God beholds their turpitude. Jesus Christ penetrates your most secret thoughts, as he did those of the scribes and doctors. If you fear the observation of men, how dare you sin in the presence of God? Men can only judge of your designs and intentions by uncertain conjectures; but God, who cannot be deceived, sounds the depth of your heart. "The heart is perverse above all things, and unsearchable, who can know it? I am the Lord who search the heart, and prove the reins: who give to every one according to his way, and according to the fruit of his devices." (*Jer.* xvii. 9, 10.)

3rd Point. Consider—"Then said he to the man sick with the palsy: Arise, take up thy bed, and go into thy house." (*Matt.* ix. 6.) The Son of God manifests his divinity by healing the sick man. He does not restore corporal health until he has applied a remedy to the spiritual and more grievous evil. In the designs of God, the infirmities of the body are the remedy of those of the soul, provided you correspond on your part. "My son, in thy sickness, neglect not thyself, but pray to the Lord, and he shall heal thee. Turn away from sin and order thy hands aright, and cleanse thy heart from all offence." (*Eccles.* xxxviii. 9, 10.) "Arise, take up thy bed, and go into thy

house." Your dwelling is in God, in whose mind you have dwelt from eternity. Your endeavour should be to abide in him by an actual recollection of his presence: and your greatest misfortune is to be separated from him by sin. If that evil befall you, return without delay by penance, to dwell in him by an indissoluble love. Your house is your conscience, where you should dwell interiorly. Let not self-love draw you to exterior objects. Enter into yourself by humility, recollection, and application to God. Banish thence vanity, envy, levity, jealousy, and suspicions, and you will find the source of spiritual delights. Your house is heaven, where you hope one day to dwell; and whither your thoughts, desires, and affections, should incessantly tend each moment you approximate to eternity. If heaven be not your everlasting habitation, hell must inevitably be your tomb!

SATURDAY.

On the vocation of St. Matthew.

1st Point. Consider—"And when he was passing by, he saw Levi, the son of Alpheus, sitting at the receipt of custom, and he saith to him: Follow me. And rising up he followed him." (*Mark*, ii. 14.) How powerful the effect of divine grace in the vocation of St. Matthew. One look, one word from the lips of Jesus, changes this publican into an apostle; who, rising without delay, quits all to follow the call of the Saviour. This man, before his conversion, was the slave of base lucre, and amidst his riches was sunk in spiritual poverty. In this condition the Son of God casts upon him a favourable eye, he calls him by a word, and at the same moment raises him from his sordid state, to such a dignity, that those who behold cannot sufficiently

admire and glorify the author of his happiness. How powerful this voice! How victorious this glance! Beseech your divine Saviour to look upon you and enlighten you with the rays of his countenance to the end you may learn to weep for your sins, and purify the stains of your soul. "And Levi made him a great feast in his house; and there was a great company of publicans and others that were at table with him." (*Luke*, v. 29.) These sinners the Saviour draws after him, as in triumph; he bears them away as rich trophies from the enemy of mankind. "But the Pharisees and Scribes murmured, saying to his disciples: Why do you eat and drink with publicans and sinners? And Jesus answering, said to them: They that are whole, need not the physician: but they that are sick. I came not to call the just, but sinners to penance" (*Luke*, v. 30, 31, 32.)

2nd Point. Consider—"Follow me." Fear not that the Son of God will reject you, since he has come to call sinners. Be not terrified by the roughness of the path through which he leads, but cast your eyes on its ultimate term. Do not expect that in following Jesus Christ you will enjoy the prosperity of this world. The way he treads is narrow and thorny, it is traced with his blood; but by his sufferings he has merited for you an infinite recompense. Follow him perseveringly: the temporal sufferings you undergo, will purchase a never-ending happiness. Not only shall the termination of your pilgrimage be happy, but also its commencement and continuance. If the road be painful and difficult to the flesh, it is agreeable to the spirit. You there find neither honours, nor pleasures, nor temporal riches; but you will find the peace of the soul, the joy of the Holy Ghost, and all the treasures of heaven. St. Augustine observes, "Every man that is converted to God exchanges his pleasures and delights. He is not absolutely deprived of these, but others are given to him instead.

Moreover, all our delights are not given to us at the present time; the greater part are reserved for us in heaven; yet the hope of possessing them is so certain, as to be preferable to all the pleasures of the world."

3rd Point. Consider—"But the Pharisees and Scribes murmured, saying to his disciples: Why do you eat and drink with publicans and sinners?" These malicious men would depreciate the Saviour of the world in the minds of his disciples, giving them to understand that he observed not the law, and consequently that they ought not to follow him. Such is their blindness, that they blame what they should praise, they hate what they should love; they find fault with the sun for shedding its rays on the dust of the earth; they condemn the physician for visiting the patient. If infinite clemency rejected the sinner, to whom could we have recourse? Give thanks to this God of goodness, who has vouchsafed, not only to eat with sinners, but to become himself their food. Stupendous mystery! A poor and contemptible creature feeds, not on the bread of angels, but on the Lord of angels. Consider the reply of the God of mercy to those envious men: "I came not to call the just, but sinners." (*Mark*, ii. 17.) In vain had he descended to call the just, for he should have found none such on the earth. "They that are well have no need of a physician, but they that are sick." (*Ibid.*) He declares himself the physician of our wounds; he glories in healing our spiritual maladies. "Go then and learn what this meaneth—*I will have mercy and not sacrifice.*" (*Matt.* ix. 13.) He reproves not the sacrifice of animals, but prefers that of mercy. He requires victims to be offered; but the offering most acceptable is charity to his poor. He prefers this sacrifice to the other, says St. Augustine.

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

On Jesus defending his Disciples.

1st Point. Consider—"And the disciples of John and the Pharisees used to fast; and they come and say to him: Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast; but thy disciples do not fast? And Jesus saith to them: Can the children of the marriage fast, as long as the bridegroom is with them?" (*Mark*, ii. 18, 19.) Jesus is the spouse of our souls, whose presence rejoices the house of God, and banishes thence all sorrow. "But the friend of the bridegroom, who standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth with joy because of the bridegroom's voice." (*John*, iii. 29.) His conversation with men was affable, sweet, and gentle; he was easy of access to all, and even towards his implacable enemies he exhibited only an ineffable meekness. He replies to the Pharisees with an incomparable modesty, dissembling the injury he receives. Learn from his example meekness of heart, and moderation in your words, when you meet with reproach and contempt.

2nd Point. Consider—"But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them; and then they shall fast in those days." (*Mark*, ii. 20.) The Apostles perfectly accomplished the prediction of their divine Master. St. Peter lived only on herbs; St. Paul passed his life "in labour and painfulness, in much watchings, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." (2 *Cor.* xi. 27.) The disciples of Jesus Christ are not always consoled with his sensible presence. They receive from his divine hand both consolation and mortification, not by caprice or humour, but according as his providence ordains. St. Paul says of himself: "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, to be content therewith. I know both how to be

brought low, and I know how to abound ; (everywhere and in all things I am instructed), both to be full, and to be hungry ; both to abound, and to suffer need." (*Phil* iv. 11, 12.) Such is the life of an evangelic labourer, of a disciple of Jesus Christ. He should be ready for all things, indifferent to all, submissive in all to the will of his Master. Were he to choose, his inclination would lead to the cross, because there he is more secure of finding Jesus Christ. Such must be your sentiments if you are the friend of the bridegroom. Fear neither exterior nor interior mortification, they can only deprive you of the sensible presence of the spouse. But fear the remissness of a tepid and sensual life, which would lead you to the loss of his grace and his love.

3rd Point. Consider—"And he also spoke a similitude to them : that no man putteth a piece from a new garment upon an old garment ; otherwise he both rendeth the new, and the piece taken from the new agreeth not with the old. And no man putteth new wine into old bottles : otherwise the new wine will break the bottles, and it will be spilled, and the bottles will be lost." (*Luke*, v. 36, 37.) Our Lord, by both similes, instructs you in the discretion necessary for the care of those souls committed to you, teaching you not to impose heavy burdens on those weak in virtue, or who have but just entered into the service of God. This would be to imitate the Pharisees, of whom our Lord said : "They bind heavy and insupportable burdens, and lay them on men's shoulders, but with a finger of their own they will not move them." (*Matt.* xxiii. 4.) They must proportion the means of advancing in virtue to the capacity of each, and to the measure of God's grace imparted to them, and not to the passing fervour, which becomes pernicious when its impetuosity is not moderated by prudence. Again, our Lord instructs you to distrust those desires that

lead to exterior mortifications which are not united to the interior. Those lead to spiritual pride and contempt of others, whom perhaps you accuse of relaxation. But you are not to neglect corporal mortification under pretext that sanctity consists in the interior. Follow therefore the counsel of St. Paul: "Let not him that eateth, despise him that eateth not; and he that eateth not, let him not judge him that eateth. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own lord he standeth or falleth." (*Rom.* xiv. 3, 4.)

MONDAY.

On Jesus raising the daughter of Jairus.

1st Point. Consider—"Behold a certain ruler came up, and adored him, saying: Lord, my daughter is even now dead; but come, lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live." (*Matt.* ix. 18.) This afflicted father deplores the death of his beloved child. How passionately are men attached to this passing life, and how little do they value the life that is eternal! What tears, regrets, and lamentations for the death of the body! what insensibility and contempt for that of the soul! Whoever suffers transitory objects to engross his heart is truly unhappy. He is pierced with sorrow when they are lost, or feels in the apprehension of losing them an anticipated misery. Happy he who learns to die daily to himself and all merely human affections! He will relinquish without pain what he has possessed without attachment. Alas! what do we seek in this mortal life? What is there in it to engage our affections? "Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity." (*Eccles.* i. 2.)

2nd Point. Consider—"Behold a certain ruler came up, and adored him." (*Matt.* ix. 18.) All the powers and principalities of heaven and earth, humbled

in the presence of the Incarnate Word, should adore him who, being the only sovereign Lord of the universe, "humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross," (*Phil.* ii. 8,) for the glory of his Father and our salvation. "For which cause God also hath exalted him, and hath given him a name, which is above all names: that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth. And that every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father." (*Phil.* ii. 9, 10, 11.) The royal prophet predicted this in the most magnificent terms: "And all kings of the earth shall adore him: all nations shall serve him. Let his name be blessed for evermore: his name continueth before the sun. And in him shall all the tribes of the earth be blessed: all nations shall magnify him. Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel: who alone doth wonderful things. And blessed be the name of his majesty for ever; and the whole earth shall be filled with his majesty. Amen." (*Ps.* lxxi. 11, 17, 18, 19.)

3rd Point. Consider—"Lord, my daughter is even now dead; but come, lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live." (*Matt.* ix. 18.) This afflicted father prays with fervour and humility, and he is heard. Jesus refuses nothing to humility: the prayer of the just man penetrates the heavens; it ascends as incense before the throne of his mercy. Complain not that God abandons you in afflictions; as his heart glows with intense charity and zeal for your true welfare. If he deny your petition, or defer your deliverance, it is only that he may purify and sanctify you by the virtue of his cross. In him you will always find either fortitude to support adversity, or the suavity that redeems its bitterness, if you oppose not the influence of his grace. Whenever you are in affliction, have recourse directly to Jesus. If you seek aid from creatures, let it be by

the impulse of grace, not by a merely human inclination; and let your heart be so disengaged, that at the first intimation of his will, you can say with the angel that conducted Tobias: "It is time that I return to him that sent me." (*Job*, xii. 20.)

Grant, O Lord, that amidst all the cares and afflictions of this life, my heart, despising all human comfort, may turn instinctively to thee. Look upon my poor soul, redeemed with thy precious blood; it is reduced to extremity by the violence of temptation and its own internal weakness, and is in danger of perishing by sin. Visit it, O infinite Goodness, that raised by thy divine hand, it may become fervent in thy love.

TUESDAY.

On Jesus going to the ruler's house.

1st Point. Consider—"And Jesus rising up followed him." (*Matt.* ix. 19.) Jesus rises at the prayer of Jairus: the Divine Word at the voice of a man. Yet tepid and slothful man makes a difficulty of rising at the call of God. He remains inactive when his sovereign Lord invites to follow him in the way of perfection, which leads to a happiness that cannot be obtained without labour. God, by an essential privilege, possesses beatitude from eternity. Angels have merited this happiness in a short time, and by a single act; but man, who is by nature inferior to angels, and who, by sin, has disordered all his faculties and weakened his strength, cannot attain everlasting happiness without great labour, much time, and many reiterated acts. If he fly labour he refuses to walk in the path of the saints, he forfeits eternal happiness, and incurs the misfortune of the reprobate. Hasten then to rise and follow the call of Jesus Christ. Renounce yourself, do

violence to your corrupt inclinations, if you will enter with him into eternal repose. "He hath rejoiced as a giant to run the way." (*Ps.* xviii. 6.) If you walk slowly, you can never overtake him. To stop is to recoil; to recoil is to perish: arise, make haste The way is long, life is short, grace presses you to advance, and by delay you incur great danger.

2nd POINT. Consider—"And he went with him." (*Matt.* v. 24.) Reflect with attention on the mystic sense of these words, admire the compassionate charity of Jesus Christ, who exercises every office, and takes every place, in order to conduct us happily to the term of our journey. He proceeds to point out the way, and draw us after him by a faithful imitation. He accompanies, to console us and facilitate our pilgrimage by the sweetness and strength of his grace. He follows, to withdraw us from our wanderings, and lead us back to his fold. How ineffable the wisdom and love with which he guides us! He conforms to our disposition, and enters into our inclinations, in order to gain our heart by this amiable condescension, and to bend our will by constraining our liberty. Should not love, gratitude, and duty, force us to conform to his spirit, and follow his divine inspirations, however opposed to our human and sensual dispositions? Since this divine Saviour deigns to accompany you, will you not permit him to lead where and as he pleases, without regarding other objects than this dear guide, on whom you should continually fix your gaze, for he is your light and your sun: when he is before your eyes, creatures disappear as shadows in his presence. But if you turn from him by infidelity, these deceitful shadows immediately advance and envelope you in darkness, in which you follow only vanity and falsehood, because you have turned from the truth.

3rd POINT. Consider—"And he admitted not any man to follow him but Peter, and James, and John, the

brother of James." (*Mark*, v. 37.) He permits all to follow him to the cross, to sufferings, and the exercise of virtue; but he admits few to a knowledge of the secret wonders he operates. Of twelve apostles he chooses but three as the witnesses of these. Learn hence, not to aspire to extraordinary favours: believe yourself unworthy of such, esteem the least grace as a great benefit in your regard, as your infidelity has merited that they should be entirely withdrawn. Be consoled that your perfection consists not in receiving great talents and great favours from God, but in obedience to his divine inspirations, and the declaration of his will. Embrace not with undiscriminating ardour all that bears the semblance of piety; because that which is perfect in itself and profitable to others, is only so in your regard when conformable to the designs of God. Every light does not proceed from the sun of justice, nor every ardour from the fire of charity. Natural disposition and the spirit of darkness are wonderfully subtle in counterfeiting the operations of the spirit of God. You will recognize these by a conformity to the meekness, docility, humility, and mortification of Jesus Christ crucified, and to the orders of obedience, which is your infallible rule. Listen to no inspiration, however good it may seem, that disturbs the peace of the soul. Reject the thoughts, however specious, that inspire a secret complacency, and withdraw you from the centre of your own nothingness. In fine, embrace not a multiplicity of acts and practices that would embarrass, but study to simplify your thoughts, and recollect yourself in God, for these lead you to unity, the friend of peace.

WEDNESDAY.

On Jesus entering the house of Jairus.

1st Point. Consider—"And they come to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and he seeth a tumult, and people weeping and wailing much." (*Mark*, v. 38.) The multitude which the Son of God finds on entering the house of Jairus, is a figure of the world, wherein is found a confused assemblage of joys and sorrows, where some are happy, others miserable, but all passing away. Eternity alone will rectify this disorder, giving to the servants of God the portion of unmixed happiness, and to the wicked, that of unmitigated woe. It is again an image of the condition in which the Son of God finds many souls, when he visits them in person in the holy communion, or by his inspiration in prayer. Their interior is disordered by vain joys and vain sadness, and by a crowd of ungoverned passions, the tumult whereof prevents the voice of God being heard in their souls. Their heart is depressed by sorrow, for the loss of some object inordinately loved; their mind is dissipated by vain amusements in which they seek to mitigate their pain, sometimes seeking human, when deprived of divine consolations, sometimes pursuing those of the spirit when their human gratifications are withdrawn. How few seek Jesus Christ with a pure intention; how few are disposed to taste of the bitterness of his chalice, and suffer with him the dereliction of the cross!

2nd Point. Consider—"He said: Give place, for the girl is not dead, but sleepeth." (*Matt.* ix. 24.) The Son of God desires to occupy your heart as sovereign master, therefore he says to its invisible enemies: "Give place." He commands them to retire, that he may reign in you absolutely, and without opposition. "To give

place," signifies, so to order your interior that all your faculties may be perfectly under his control. Do you second his designs? When your passions revolt against reason, or your inordinate desires oppose the inspirations of grace, do you command them, in the words of our Lord, to give place?" If you resolutely banish them from your heart, Jesus Christ will take possession of it to be your everlasting reward. But if sin and self-love find admittance, you may justly fear the sentence of the reprobate—"Depart from me;" you have banished me from your heart, and I banish you from my heavenly kingdom. Fatal divorce! Yet sinners deride this menace, and abandon themselves to their passions, with as much liberty as if their judge possessed not power to execute his word. Be not of the number of those blinded persons, who mock the fear of death, hell, the judgments of God, and a miserable eternity. Listen with respect to what the Son of God adds for your consolation—"The girl is not dead, but sleepeth." Because, as St. Jerome observes, all things live in the bosom of God, who can restore them when he pleases. Abandon yourself to his providence, and he will restore to you that which he judges profitable; if he restores it not, he will give you what is more conducive to your good. He only deprives you of that which is injurious, and in return he gives you himself as your everlasting recompense.

3rd Point. Consider—"And when the multitude was put forth, he went in, and took her by the hand, and the maid arose." (*Matt.* ix. 25.) Admire the facility with which the Son of God operates this miracle. Could the united powers of mankind force death to restore a single captive? Yet a single word from the lips of Jesus Christ shall one day call forth all the dead from the tomb. The divine word penetrates the abyss of nothingness, to give a being to that which did not exist, or restore it where it had been lost! The dead obey

him, nonentity hears his voice, insensible creatures make no resistance; and you, more vile than nothingness, more insensible than the rocks, dare to oppose his holy will. Jesus works his miracles silently and without ostentation, to condemn the slaves of vanity, who seek in all their actions the applause of the world. He also gives herein an excellent model of the hidden life, on which his disciples should form themselves; concealing those favors that would attract the esteem of creatures, and using them only for the glory of God, and their own salvation. "And her spirit returned, and she rose immediately, and he bid them give her to eat." (*Luke*, viii. 55.) There are three circumstances necessary for a perfect conversion: to rise promptly, to advance in the path of virtue, and to be fortified with the Eucharistic bread. The spirit of God must be recalled. Beware, lest after having banished the spirit of the world, it may be said the spirit is returned, on account of your attachment to vanity, interest, or pleasure. "Turn, O my soul, into thy rest; for the Lord hath been bountiful to thee." (*Ps.* cxiv. 7.)

Spirit of Jesus, return into my heart, to fill it with thy force, and rekindle in it the fire of thy love. O my Saviour, exterminate within me the spirit of the world and of the flesh, lest they should banish from my soul thy divine spirit, and the sentence thou hast pronounced should fall upon me: "My spirit shall not remain in man for ever, because he is flesh." (*Gen.* vi. 3.)

THURSDAY.

On Jesus healing the Woman who was troubled with the issue of blood.

1st Point. Consider—"And behold a woman who was troubled with an issue of blood twelve years, came

behind him, and touched the hem of his garment. For she said within herself: If I shall touch only his garments, I shall be healed." (*Matt.* ix. 29.) The care of this woman in seeking her cure is a tacit reproach to our insensibility with regard to spiritual maladies, and at the same time a salutary instruction, to seek the most efficacious remedies for our infirmities. "And there was a certain woman who had an issue of blood twelve years, who had bestowed all her substance on physicians, and could not be healed by any; and she came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment; and immediately the issue of blood stopped." (*Luke*, viii. 43, 44.) Love and confidence attract her to Jesus Christ, but respect and a feeling of her own unworthiness cause her to remain behind him. Love conducts us to Jesus Christ by confidence in his goodness; humility, by impressing us with respect for his greatness. "She came behind him and touched the hem of his garment," esteeming herself unworthy to touch his sacred person. All that belongs to the Son of God is worthy of respect, even to the hem of his garment. This garment is his sacred humanity, with which he clothed himself in his incarnation. The pain and ignominy in which he terminated his life on the cross, may be mystically likened to the hem of his robe, which we should touch with faith, love, and reverence, in meditation, as well as in the reception of the sacraments, if we would be healed. The sacramental species are also the garment of his humanity; these we should approach with profound humility, mingled with holy confidence, saying: "If I shall touch only his garment." (*Matt.* ix. 21.)

O my God and my Saviour, vouchsafe to shed from thy sacred wounds the stream of mercy that will cleanse our defilements, for those fountains of life are the inexhaustible source of grace, healing the maladies of the soul.

2nd Point. Consider—the question of the Son of God: "Who hath touched my garments?" (*Mark*, v. 30,) and the reply of St. Peter, together with the confession of the woman who was cured, prove that many approach the physician of their soul, but few touch him and are healed. "And his disciples said to him: Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, who hath touched me? And he looked about to see her who had done this. But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth. And he said to her: Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole, go in peace, and be thou whole of thy disease." (*Mark*, v. 31, 32, 33, 34.) Examine the circumstances of the miracle. Whilst this woman exteriorly touches the garment of the Son of God, she at the same time touches his heart, attracting his charity and compassion, by her humility and faith. But he had undoubtedly prevented her by touching her soul with his grace, before he restored her health by his miraculous power. Beseech him to touch your heart, in order to convert it; to touch your passions, in order to mortify them; and all your faculties, spiritual and corporal, for the purpose of uniting them to himself. Implore also that you may touch him by reverence for his greatness, and confidence in his goodness. That you may touch the garment of his glory, by the desire of beholding him, that of his ignominy by participation of his sufferings, and that of his virtues, by conformity to his holy example.

3rd Point. Consider—"Master, the multitudes throng and press thee, and dost thou say, who touched me?" (*Luke*, viii. 45.) Many press to the Eucharistic table with the irreverence of this multitude, and at the same time press divine justice to punish their sacrilegious profanations; to few can the Son of God say: "Somebody hath touched me." (*Luke*, viii. 46.) Of

so many sick persons, few are healed, because few are disposed to participate in his spirit, and, nevertheless, *virtue goes forth from him*, capable of vivifying and sanctifying souls that receive him with love and reverence. "But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth." (*Mark*, v. 33.) Such is the effect of divine grace in the soul; it illuminates her with a knowledge of eternal truths; it fills her with awe and reverence for the divine presence; it humbles her, because the nearer she approaches to the divine immensity, the more profoundly she sinks in her own nothingness. She confesses at the same time her maladies and her cure, her baseness and the mercies of God, that she may exalt his glory by her own confusion. When a soul so loves Jesus Christ as to annihilate her own interest in the desire of his glory, he caresses, and fills her with confidence; he recompenses her with a profound peace, which crowns all his gifts, and with this treasure he sends her away satisfied.

O God of peace, happy the soul that with holy awe adheres to thee, and receives the favourable influence of thy grace! thrice happy to bear the *sweet yoke* of thy law, and act only by the inspiration of thy spirit! Such a soul shall enjoy an unalterable repose, and thou who art the author and director of her operations, wilt establish her in everlasting peace.

FRIDAY.

On Jesus restoring sight to two blind men.

1st Point. Consider—"And as Jesus passed from thence, there followed him two blind men, crying out and saying: Have mercy on us, O Son of David." (*Matt.* ix. 27.) These men, though deprived of corporal

light, are clear-sighted according to the spirit; since they discover and follow Jesus Christ, "the true light, which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world." (*John*, i. 9.) He testifies of himself: "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth in me may not remain in darkness." (*John*, xii. 35.) How many pauses do you make in the journey to eternity? You pass your life in a thousand frivolous amusements, which retard your progress, instead of following Jesus Christ, as did these blind men, who quitted him not until he had restored their sight. St. Chrysostom says, their faith condemned the Pharisees, because they believed in Jesus Christ on the report of his miracles, and thus recovered their sight; whereas those proud minds, after having witnessed so many wonders, remain in their infidelity, and become blinded by malice. Have you not still more cause of confusion at your infidelity to the light which enlightens you? How often has passion dimmed your spiritual vision, or inordinate affection to creatures deprived you of seeing the Creator? In what darkness have you hitherto been? And now that God has vouchsafed to "call you to his admirable light," to how many inspirations do you still remain blind? When your mind is calm, you confess that you must suffer, must pardon injuries, and receive all things from the hand of God; but when a vexatious event occurs, you are again involved in darkness, and cannot see the light. How often should you cry out with these blind men: "Have mercy on us, O Son of David." (*Matt.* ix. 27.)

2nd Point. Consider—"And when he was come to the house, the blind men came to him. And Jesus saith to them: Do you believe that I can do this unto you? They say to him: Yea, Lord. Then he touched their eyes, saying: According to your faith be it done unto you." (*Matt.* viii. 28, 29.) He confers not this favour on the way, he defers it until they have entered

the house. Heaven is the mansion of God. There he illuminates the blind, he opens the eyes of the blessed to contemplate his sovereign beauty. We are here below in the region of darkness, deprived of the light of glory, without which we cannot see God face to face; "because we shall see him as he is." (*John*, iii. 2.) At present faith, animated by confidence and love, is the light of the soul, the fundamental virtue of salvation, given us, as St. Augustine says, to obtain all else that is necessary. God acts towards us according to our faith and confidence. If these be great, he operates great things in us; if weak, he effects but little; if they be altogether wanting, we remain sunk in spiritual poverty. Faith is the measure of the gifts of God; it is the treasure of a Christian, including all the gifts of heaven.

3rd Point. Consider—"And Jesus strictly charged them, saying: See that no man know this." (*Matt.* ix. 30.) The Son of God does not impose a command to conceal the miracle, but gives an example of the contempt of human praise and honour. And thus it was understood by these men, for "they going out, spread his fame abroad in all that country." (*Matt.* ix. 31.) According to St. Gregory, the secrecy which our Lord recommends, is an instruction to fly vain-glory, and their example teaches us to publish the praises of God for the edification of our neighbour. Gratitude, says Euthimus, impels the receiver to publish a benefit; but modesty and humility oblige the benefactor to bury it in silence. Wherefore the more heroic the deeds you perform, the more carefully should you conceal them; for thus shall you receive the greater glory before God and man. St. Chrysostom, in his homilies, says: "God does not permit signal actions or heroic virtues to remain long unknown; but if you hide, he will publish them."

SATURDAY.

On Jesus delivering the dumb demoniac.

1st Point. Consider—"And when they were gone out, behold they brought him a dumb man, possessed with a devil." (*John*, i. 4.) Who can unbind the tongue of the dumb, but the eternal Word? or who can chase away the spirit of darkness, but he who is the light of men?" (*Matt.* ix. 32.) The power of Jesus Christ is alike salutary to man and fatal to the devil. "Death shall go before his face, and the devil shall go forth before his feet." (*Heb.* iii. 5.) His love is our armour. "Put you on the armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil." (*Eph.* vi. 11.) What can a Christian fear in the presence of Jesus Christ? Can he fear the devil, if he is united with God? Can he fear to lose the victory, combating under such a king? We are daily exposed to the attacks of the devil, but Jesus Christ is our defence. He is more powerful to support, than the devil to overthrow us. His charity is mindful of us in all places. His zeal is the protection of his faithful servants, not only against the pride of man, but also against the power of the spirits of darkness, who watch continually for our destruction.

2nd Point. Consider—"And after the devil was cast out, the dumb man spoke, and the multitude wondered, saying: Never was the like seen in Israel. But the Pharisees said, By the prince of devils he casteth out devils." (*Matt.* ix. 33, 34.) How important to have a heart well disposed to profit by the graces of God! The people who are uninfluenced by passion or interest, admire the miracle. The Pharisees, on the contrary, who were filled with pride, envy, and hatred of Jesus Christ, not being able to deny his power, attribute it to an intelligence with the prince of darkness.

Fly envy, says St. Ignatius the martyr; the devil is its author, Cain his successor, and homicide its fruit. Pride, says St. Leo, was the first sin of the devil, and the cause of his ruin. Envy was the second, which impelled him to our destruction, because he abideth not in truth; his strength was in falsehood, and from this empoisoned source his malice drew the snares by which he sought to involve us in his own misfortune. How displeasing to God is the self-complacency of those who glory in his graces, as if they had not been received, or if as received, attributing them to their own merits; or who, whilst acknowledging them to be gratuitous gifts, do not possess them with fraternal charity, but make them a motive for preferring themselves to their brethren.

3rd Point. Consider—"And Jesus went about all the cities and towns, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease, and every infirmity." (*Matt.* ix. 35.) Notwithstanding the calumnies of the Jews, the Son of God continues to instruct the people and to heal the sick, repaying their injuries with benefits. Thus your repeated infidelities have not drained the source of his liberality; he continues to shed on you his graces, and patiently expects your repentance. Learn hence to comport yourself in like manner towards your neighbour. When you have received an injury, first place the seal of silence on your lips, that your heart may be closed to the spirit of discord, and retain the holy spirit therein; for if you retaliate, you open a door to the demon, and expose yourself to his insults. Therefore, say with Job—"And I have not rather held my peace, and not gone out of the door." (*Job*, xxxi. 34.) That is, according to the explanation of St. Gregory, I have not opened my lips, either to defend my innocence, or to reply to those who insulted my misery. Be not content with burying the injury in silence; endeavour to

turn it to your advantage, by offering it to God as an expiatory sacrifice, after the example of David, who received the injuries of Semei in this spirit—"Perhaps the Lord may look upon my affliction, and the Lord may render me good for the cursing of this day." (2 *Kings*, xvi. 12.) Or rather imitate the Son of God, who repays the injuries of the Jews by healing their sick. Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil by good. Thus will you shew forth the character of children of God, and become like to your heavenly Father, who makes his sun to rise on the just and the wicked, and rains on the just and the unjust.

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

On Jesus healing the paralytic at the pond.

1st Point. Consider—"After these things was a festival day of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there was at Jerusalem a pond, called Probatica, which in Hebrew is named Bethsaida, having five porches." (*John*, v. 1, 2.) The Probatica pond, according to the fathers, is a figure of baptism. This type, which was medicinal to the body, predicted the spiritual healing of the soul, says Tertullian. The angel descended into the pond to restore health to the infirm, but the Holy Ghost descends for your sanctification. The waters of baptism, says St. Zenon, give life to the dead, change irrational animals into reasonable men, and men into angels. What has endowed it with this power? The spirit of Jesus Christ; his precious blood, and his cross, which possesses a virtue infinitely superior to that of the wood which sweetened the bitter waters of Mara. For what can be more sweet than the waters of baptism, which regenerates all the predestinate, effaces sin, and gives a title to glory. Happy he who preserves unto

death the grace of his spiritual regeneration! To him may be addressed what the Son of God said to the paralytic: "Behold thou art made whole, sin no more, lest some worse thing happen to thee;" for those who sin after baptism are more severely punished than infidels. If, unhappily, this counsel is too late, if you have already lost the grace of your baptism, cast yourself, without delay, into the second pond, which is that of penance, where Jesus Christ awaits to restore your spiritual life.

2nd Point. Consider—"In these lay a great multitude of sick, of blind, of lame, of withered, waiting for the moving of the water." (*John*, v. 3.) Such is the condition of the greater part of Christians, and an image of their spiritual maladies. Some are languid, weary of walking in the way of virtue; others blind, not beholding eternal truth; others paralytic, who pass their life in sloth and indolence; others have their members withered, having no relish for devotion. Examine to what class you belong, and seek a speedy remedy. When the heart of the sinner is touched with sincere sorrow for his offences, accompanied with humility and reverence towards God, he should have immediate recourse to the sacrament of penance, to be cleansed in the precious blood of Jesus Christ Of so many sick persons who awaited the movement of the water in the pond, there was but one cured. It was not the most learned, noble, or rich, but the first who descended into the water, he who was most diligent. Diligence is necessary, for a tardy correspondence frustrates divine grace. The sinner must prove that he is healed, by an exemplary life, in bearing the yoke of Jesus Christ. "Take up thy bed and walk." (*John*, v. 8.) You must obey, and whatever difficulty you may encounter, bear your cross after Jesus Christ. "The Jews therefore said to him that was healed: It is the sabbath, it is not lawful for thee to take up thy bed." (*John*, v. 10.)

The world would turn you away from mortification and penance; but reply with the paralytic: "He that made me whole, said to me:" (*John*, v. 11.) "Take up my yoke upon you, and learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart;" (*Matt.* xi. 29.) and this yoke shall be to you a bed where you will find the repose of your soul.

3rd Point. Consider—the Probatica pond is also a figure of martyrdom, which effaces sin, and the passion of Jesus Christ, the king of martyrs. The blood of martyrs effaces only their personal offences: but the blood of the immaculate Lamb "taketh away the sins of the world." His five wounds are as the "five porches" of the pond, whither sinners may retire to receive the effects of his mercy. From his heart, dissolved in love, flow water and blood, as a salutary balm to heal all spiritual maladies. It rests with you to partake of its virtue. If you cannot return blood for blood by martyrdom, at least offer love for love, and tears of compunction with the water that flowed from his sacred side. Penance and baptism remit sin in virtue of the institution of Jesus Christ; martyrdom, by the promise of God to those who lay down their life for his service; and perfect contrition, as an immediate disposition to sanctifying grace, which restores the sinner to the friendship of God.

Spirit of Jesus Christ, open in my heart a source of love, whence tears of perfect compunction may unceasingly flow. And grant that I may fly with horror whatever may abate the love, or dry the tears, which the sufferings of my Saviour, and my iniquities demand.

MONDAY.

On the complaint of the paralytic.

1st Point. Consider—"The infirm man answered him: Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pond." (*John*, v. 7.) During thirty-eight years had this poor paralytic implored the aid of man, without finding one who would contribute to his relief. How little can we expect from creatures, and how long may we languish, vainly expecting their succour! What impotence, ignorance, and want of good will, do we discover in them! In our greatest necessities they abandon us: Jesus alone remains constant. Therefore we may say, when he is not present, all things are wanting. Before God had created light, he blessed neither the earth nor the sea, because they were yet in darkness, teaching us that if Jesus, who is the light of the world, does not enlighten us, all is but the darkness of error and perdition. For in effect, whithersoever we turn, if we find not Jesus, we remain deprived of all good. The Incarnate Wisdom is the author of every benefit we receive. Wo to him that confides, or seeks his happiness in man! He leans on a feeble reed, that will break beneath his hand, and leave him without support! Happy he whose hope is the Omnipotent! In him will he find strength, defence, and remedy for all his necessities.

2nd Point. Consider—how God, by a marvellous effect of providential love, permits his friends to be abandoned by creatures, thus drawing them by a tender violence to seek their happiness in himself alone. He so provides for all their necessities, that out of him they need seek for nothing. He is their path, and their term, their support and their spiritual life. If we are members, he is our head; if we combat, he

combats with us; if we conquer, he is our judge and our crown. Thus he draws us by every means, and will not suffer us to wander from him, or attach ourselves to any creature. If we cast our eyes on created objects, he immediately intercepts our view, in order that all thoughts, hopes, and desires may centre in himself. Say then with David: "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy face? If I ascend into heaven, thou art there; if I descend into hell, thou art present. If I take my wings early in the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there also shall thy hand lead me: and thy right hand shall hold me." (*Ps.* cxxxviii. 7, 8, 9, 10.)

3rd Point. Consider—"The infirm man answered him: Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pond." (*John*, v. 7.) Apply to yourself, and choose as your device these words: "I have no man!" That is, I desire not the favour or friendship of man. Jesus Christ alone can satisfy my desires: he alone is necessary to my soul, that it may be sanctified: to my understanding, that it may be enlightened with his knowledge: to my will, that it may be inflamed with his love: to my faculties, that they may be governed by his justice: to my passions, that they may be subdued by his power: to my senses, that they may be purified and subjected to the spirit. "I have no man!" That is, I desire no particular friendship prejudicial to fraternal charity. To the God-Man alone I would attach myself, and be occupied only with him who is singularly great, good, and amiable. "I have no man!" That is, I wish not to live in the heart of any creature; I only desire a place in that of my Saviour, who is the universal friend whom the Father hath given to men, who has died for all, who makes himself all to all, and who is the sovereign good of all. Therefore each may appropriate to himself and say: My Jesus and my all, "I have no man!" That is, I

am satisfied to be unacquainted with creatures, and to be unknown to them, provided that I be not ignorant of Jesus Christ, as was the paralytic, who knew not who it was that had healed him: for I must remember his words to reduce them to practice, and his benefits to render him continual thanksgiving.

TUESDAY.

On the warning of Jesus to the paralytic.

1st Point. Consider—"Afterwards Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said to him: Behold thou art made whole; sin no more, lest some worse thing happen to thee." (*John*, v. 14.) Gratitude for the pardon of past sins, should be the first motive to guard you against relapse. God willingly grants pardon to a sinner although he be unworthy, but he does not so easily pardon the ungrateful. All the benefits you possess, whether natural or supernatural, are so many graces from his liberal hand, obliging you to revere the inexhaustible source of mercy whence they flow. But the consideration that should redouble your gratitude is, the great evils whence he has delivered you; that is, from eternal damnation, the slavery of the devil, spiritual blindness, the misery and malice of the world, and the profound abyss of evil, into which you were precipitated, and whence you could never arise without his compassionate succour. Ungrateful and ungenerous spirit, who so often relapsed into the same offences, as if you received pardon only to repeat them with increased audacity, tire not the mercy of God, and be not wicked, because he is good. Fear, lest the waves of his anger overwhelm you, as did those of the Red Sea the host of Pharao, in punishment of his reiterated perfidy towards the people of God. It is an insupport-

able ingratitude that renewed offences should continually follow the receiving of pardon.

2nd Point. Consider—"Sin no more." The second motive that should guard you against relapse is, that it notably aggravates sin; for the pardon which you previously received imposes a more strict obligation to shun the occasion which has already led you to offend God. As the second sin is more grievous than the first, you are proportionably more guilty; because ordinarily in such a case there is more of malice, ingratitude, infidelity, attachment to sin, and to the cause of the devil, to whom you return as a vile apostate, after having violated the faith you owed to God. Moreover, although God will not impute to you, or inflict chastisement for sins already forgiven, nevertheless, you become more criminal by abusing the pardon before received; and as by repentance you had acquired an increase of grace, the abuse of this by your perfidy is more considerable, and renders you more unworthy. In this sense may be understood the words of St. Basil, that the remission of past offences avails not the relapsing sinner.

3rd Point. Consider—"Sin no more, lest some worse thing happen to thee." The third motive that should guard you against relapse is, that it merits a more signal chastisement than the sin previously committed. The first time the ark of the testament was placed on the altar of Dagon, the Lord overthrew the idol, but the second time he broke it, casting it on the ground. Thus you may fear his justice will treat you, if, after casting down the idol of sin from your heart, you raise it up again in violation of your promise faithfully to worship God alone. "Sin no more, lest some worse thing happen thee." "And he that passeth over from justice to sin, God hath prepared such an one for the sword." (*Eccles.* xxvi. 27.) Fear to separate yourself from God by sin, lest the sword of avenging

justice separate you eternally from the body of his elect, as a useless member, to be cast into the fire. Reflect seriously hereon. The remembrance of so dreadful an evil will preserve you from sin. Fear not to descend now into hell. It is a place of torment for the dead, but for the living a refuge against everlasting misery.

O Lord, "who will grant me this, that thou mayest protect me in hell, and hide me till thy wrath pass, and appoint me a time when thou wilt remember me? Thou shalt call me, and I will answer thee: to the work of thy hands thou shalt reach thy right hand. Thou, indeed, hast numbered my steps, but spare my sins." (*Job*, xiv. 13, 15, 16.)

WEDNESDAY.

On the disciples plucking the ears of corn on the Sabbath day.

1st Point. Consider—"And it came to pass on the second first sabbath, that as he went through the corn fields, his disciples plucked the ears, and did eat, rubbing them in their hands." (*Luke*, vi. 1.) The disciples of Jesus Christ forget the privations of poverty in the happiness of following their divine Master, and living in his society. They endure hunger, and you desire to live in ease and abundance. They are content with simple and scanty food, and you murmur at an accidental mortification of your palate. They are happy and satisfied in this extreme poverty and austerity of life, because Jesus is with them. The love they bear their divine Lord, the sweetness of his conversation, and the sanctity of his doctrine, soothe all their pains, and are to them as a delicious banquet, surpassing all the empty joys of the world. If Jesus dwelt

within your soul, or if you had once penetrated to his sacred heart, and tasted the sweetness of his love, you would contemn alike what pleased or displeased your self-love, you would even rejoice to suffer something for his sake, who has spared nothing to render you eternally happy.

2nd POINT. Consider—"And some of the Pharisees said to them: Why do you that which is not lawful on the sabbath day? And Jesus answering said: Have you not read so much as this, what David did, when himself was hungry, and they that were with him?" (*Luke*, vi. 2, 3.) "Or have you not read in the law, that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple break the sabbath, and are without blame? But I tell you that there is here a greater than the temple. And if you knew what this meaneth, *I will have mercy, and not sacrifice*, you would never have condemned the innocent." (*Matt.* xii. 5, 6, 7.) Those who are so prompt to judge others, neither have a knowledge of themselves, nor of the goodness of God, who loves mercy. "For the Son of Man is Lord even of the sabbath," (*Matt.* xii. 8,) which was ordained for his honour, who is the end and accomplishment of all the legal ceremonies, and in whom resides the power of dispensing with their observance. In what indifference may we hold the judgments of men, provided we are approved by him who is the author of the law, and the judge of all the actions of men! The praise or the censure of creatures is alike insignificant, since the one renders us not more holy, nor the other more wicked. The Lord is my judge, him alone do I fear. Lord, "pierce thou my flesh with thy fear: for I am afraid of thy judgments." (*Ps* cxviii. 20.)

3rd POINT. Consider—"And it came to pass on the second first sabbath, that as he went through the corn fields his disciples plucked the ears, and did eat, rubbing them in their hands." (*Luke*, vi. 1.) Admire the

happiness of the apostles, and the true children of Israel, who follow Jesus Christ *walking through the corn fields.* Moses conducted the Israelites through a sterile and hideous desert, where they subsisted only by miracle. But our amiable guide leads his disciples through fertile land, covered with fruit, through a paradise of delights, instead of a desert. Who are they that enjoy this happiness? Faithful souls, who observe the commandments of God, and meditate assiduously on the holy Scriptures. *Hungering after justice* they seek the bread of life to satiate, and at the same time to augment their hunger. This they do on the Sabbath day, that is, when moderating their passions, they taste, with an agreeable repose, how sweet the Lord is, and how happy the man who places in him all his confidence. Wherefore they gather the ears, and press out the grain with their hands; that is, they choose some words from these sacred writings, which are most proper to touch their hearts, and repass them frequently in their mind, until they have drawn forth the fruit of full and perfect charity.

THURSDAY.

On Jesus healing the man whose hand was withered.

1st Point. Consider—"And it came to pass also on another Sabbath, that he entered into the synagogue and taught. And there was a man whose right hand was withered." (*Luke*, vi. 6) In this man you behold an image of the dangerous condition of three classes of persons. The first are the avaricious, who imitate the wicked rich man in his sin, and are therefore in danger of becoming the companions of his punishment. "If one of thy brethren that dwelleth within the gates of thy city, in the land which the Lord thy God will give thee, come to poverty: thou shalt not harden thy

heart, nor close thy hand. But thou shalt open it to the poor man, thou shalt lend him that which thou perceivest he hath need of." (*Deut.* xv. 7, 8.) The second are the slothful and tepid, who shun grievous sin, but will not embrace the practice of mortification. These are in danger of perishing by spiritual famine; for the apostle says: "If any man will not work, neither let him eat." (*Thes.* iii. 10.) And David: "For thou shalt eat the labours of thy hands: blessed art thou, and it shall be well with thee." (*Ps.* cxxvii. 2.) The third are the children of the world, who are industrious in temporal affairs, and careless and inactive in spiritual concerns. Their left hand is vigorous, but their right hand withered and motionless. Such are in danger of losing the recompense given only to good works. He that labours only for a time, shall find nothing in eternity. "Whatsoever thy hand is able to do, do it earnestly." (*Eccles.* ix. 10.)

2nd Point. Consider—"And the scribes and pharisees watched if he would heal on the sabbath, that they might find an accusation against him." (*Luke*, vi. 7.) Thus, envy finds its torment in the happiness of its brethren, it opposes the most holy actions, and finds fault with all that is accomplished by others. The priests, jealous of the glory of Jesus Christ, narrowly observe his actions, seeking therein a subject of accusation. They lay snares for virtue because they love vice. These wicked judges, in imputing to our Lord as a crime the cure of the sick, discover their own malice in finding cause of accusation in a work of mercy, and sin in an act of charity towards a suffering object. Thus the malicious usually construe deeds of virtue, and the impious mock that which is holy. But fear of their misrepresentations or sarcasms, must never cause you to relinquish the good works which God and your state of life demand: be careful, however, to observe the meekness and discretion exemplified in the Son of

God, who healed the sick that presented themselves, but forbid them to divulge the miracle. "That it might be fulfilled," says the evangelist, "which was spoken by Isaias the prophet, saying: Behold my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved in whom my soul hath been well pleased. I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall show judgment to the gentiles. He shall not contend, nor cry out, neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets, the bruised reed he shall not break, and smoking flax he shall not extinguish, until he send forth judgment unto victory." (*Matt.* xii. 17, *et seq.*)

3rd Point. Consider—"He said to the man: Stretch forth thy hand. And he stretched it forth: and his hand was restored." (*Luke*, vi. 10.) Your right hand also is withered, and powerless for the practice of virtue; your left, on the contrary, is fruitful in evil, and active for the commission of sin. Hence you do what is prohibited, and omit what is commanded; showing firmness and vigour only in resisting the spirit of God, who inspires a love of the latter, and aversion for the former. Your infirmity is dangerous, have speedy recourse to Jesus Christ. To you also he says "Arise and stand forth in the midst." (*Luke*, vi. 8.) "Stretch forth thy hand." This is the essential point of perfection. Be not satisfied with weak desires. You must proceed to practise. Jesus Christ says not, stretch forth thy mind, multiply sublime thoughts, ardent desires, elevated discourse: frequently it is more necessary to restrain than dilate those; but stretch forth thy hand to the exercise of those virtues which you know, and in which you instruct others. For the kingdom of God consists not in words, but in virtues. "Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doth the will of my Father who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." (*Matt.* vii. 21.)

Most amiable Saviour, I humbly beseech thee to heal also my hand, that I may stretch it forth, either to give liberally what thou commandest, or receive from thee with equal affection and thanksgiving, thy chalice or thy consolations, the crown of thorns or of glory; that I may execute faithfully thy commands and counsels, declared to me by superiors, or the rules and obligations of my state, which I purpose henceforth faithfully to accomplish with the aid of thy divine grace.

FRIDAY.

On Jesus choosing his Apostles.

1st Point. Consider—"And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and he passed the whole night in the prayer of God. And when day was come, he called unto him his disciples; and he chose twelve of them (whom also he named Apostles)." (*Luke*, vi. 12, 13.) Meditate the qualities of the prayer with which the Son of God commences the election of his Apostles. His prayer is long; for he passes therein the entire night. It is fervent, because the subject is most important: therefore he chooses the time best suited for treating of it with his heavenly Father. In fine, it is most sublime, it is "the prayer of God." He offers his prayer on a high mountain, instructing us, that during this holy exercise we should elevate our mind to God, and remove as far as possible from the commerce and tumult of creatures. Jesus Christ prays not from necessity. He who has power to command, teaches you to obey, and becomes himself your advocate. What should you not do for your own salvation, since this divine Saviour passes whole nights in prayer, to obtain for you the graces you stand in need of? What should you not do in commencing a

work of piety, since *he* prays before selecting his Apostles, and chooses a solitary place, that he may give himself with the greater application to this heavenly conversation.

2nd Point. Consider—the employment, the qualities, and number of the Apostles. Their employment is equally great and difficult, for it is the conquest of all the nations of the earth. The dignity of the Apostles, says St. Chrysostom, is the most exalted of all graces, and assemblage of all gifts. Their qualities bear no proportion to their employment; for he chooses men of low condition to subject kings and monarchs, men simple and unlearned to confound the sages of the world, men poor and destitute to gain and attract the rich. This he does designedly to show forth his sovereign power and infinite greatness. Thus David speaks in the persons of the Apostles: "O clap your hands, all ye nations: shout unto God with the voice of joy. For the Lord is high terrible: a great king over all the earth. He hath subdued the people under us; and the nations under our feet. He hath chosen for us his inheritance, the beauty of Jacob which he hath loved." (*Ps.* xlvi. 2, *et seq*) In fine, their number is full of mystery. The Apostles, says Tertullian, are as the twelve fountains of Elim, watering all the earth; the twelve precious stones that sparkled on the robe of the High Priest; the twelve stones that Josue drew forth from Jordan; the foundation stones on which Jesus Christ has built his church, of which the first is Saint Peter, who is the visible head of that universal church, out of which there is no salvation.

3rd Point. Consider—the Son of God calls Judas also to the apostolic dignity. He chooses him, says Euthimus, whilst he is yet a man of virtue; demonstrating thereby that he receives the just man until he becomes wicked, and treats him according to his present justice. He chooses him by an effect of his provi-

dence, though foreseeing the future treason of this unhappy disciple, says St. Ambrose. The foreknowledge of his crime prevents not the God of clemency from exalting him to so sublime an honour. He would rather expose his wisdom to be questioned, than his affection for man. Yet, notwithstanding this so signal a favour, Judas incurs eternal reprobation, by the abuse of the grace that had so eminently distinguished him; teaching us, says Victor, that it is not the nature of man, but his free will, that is the cause of his perdition. Wherefore, diffide in yourself, and let your fear of abusing the graces you have received increase in proportion to their number and magnitude. Whilst you adore the judgments of God with profound respect, admire and love his infinite goodness, which, out of the greatest crimes, knows and wills to draw the greatest advantages. Imitate this divine model, by performing all the good in your power, without expecting a recompense. He was pleased to confer benefits on an ungrateful and perfidious apostle, to console you, if sometimes it occur that your favours are misplaced, or your care deceived, in the choice of those on whom they are conferred.

SATURDAY.

On Jesus instructing the people.

1st Point. Consider—"And seeing the multitude, he went up into a mountain, and when he was sat down, his disciples came unto him. And opening his mouth, he taught them." (*Matt.* v. 1.) Jesus teaches by his word the way to beatitude. It is a way most elevated. Wherefore he ascends the mountain, as the throne of his Father's majesty, to establish rules and precepts of a heavenly life, says St. Hilary. It is a

way most agreeable; for happiness is the centre of all our desires, and who would not rejoice at finding the way thereto? It is a mysterious way; for who would believe that poverty, sufferings, and tears, were the road to happiness, as God has declared? Who esteems himself happy in being poor? Who would esteem himself unhappy in being rich? How miserable are they who know not their own misery! Happy are they whom God calls to the society of his Son, and to his admirable light, to enter into the true sentiments of the Gospel. Blessed be the Father of our Lord, who has given us a Master on earth, and who has placed words on his lips, to teach his ways to those who are meek. Blessed be the Son, who has opened his lips as the outpouring of a treasure, and as a source of living waters, to water all the earth. Resolve, therefore, to listen with respect to this heavenly doctrine—to this new canticle, unheard in the ancient testament.

O Jesus, let thy voice sound in my ears: "For thy voice is sweet, and thy face comely." (*Cant.* ii. 14.) "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." (*Kings*, viii. 9.) "I will hear what the Lord God will speak in me." (*Ps.* lxxxiv. 9.)

2nd Point. Consider—Jesus has pointed out by his example the way to beatitude. He has traced for us in his life a model of every virtue. Who has quitted so rich an inheritance as he, to embrace poverty? Who has endured contradiction with such meekness, or so bitterly deplored the sins of the world? Who has so much loved justice and purity of heart, and been such a friend to peace? In fine, who has ever exhibited a patience so invincible, under persecution, opprobrium, and torments? And why all this, but to point out the path to heaven? Thus has the Son of God opened for his elect an admirable way through the stormy sea of the world, by which they pass to the land of the living, the sojourn of eternal beatitude. He has passed this

sea the first; he has made to himself a way through the waters of affliction, tears, and mortification. "Thy way is in the sea, and thy paths in many waters; and thy footsteps shall not be known" (*Ps.* lxxvi. 20) by the children of the world; they are discovered only by the true Israelites: "That we may know thy way upon earth; thy salvation in all nations." (*Ps.* lxvi. 3.) Beseech him, therefore, to shed upon you the light of his wisdom, that you may walk in his footsteps. "Make me to understand the way of thy justifications; and I shall be exercised in thy wondrous works." (*Ps.* cxviii. 27.)

3rd Point. Consider—Jesus facilitates to us by his grace the way to beatitude. To judge according to the senses, that way is narrow and painful; but those who live according to the spirit find it spacious and agreeable. The beatitude of the world is exterior, consisting in riches, honours, and pleasures; these the spirit of Jesus Christ rejects, as deceitful goods that conceal real evils; but the beatitude of the Gospel is interior, and consists in wisdom, justice, fortitude, meekness, humility, patience, and other virtues delightful to the soul who beholds them in the light of grace. In this divine light meditate the eight beatitudes. They are as many steps formed of precious stones, by which the faithful soul ascends to the kingdom of Jesus Christ. Contemplate in order these sublime virtues, which, according to St. Chrysostom form a chain of gold, with which the Celestial Spouse draws those souls that are taken with his love. The term to which he attracts them is the kingdom of heaven, and he leads them thereto by the sweetness of his love. Nothing is difficult to him who loves; therefore love him who, for the love of you, has descended from heaven, even to the death of the cross, that you may ascend by this ladder of Paradise, composed of the wood of life. Say to him, in the fervour of your heart: "Draw me: we will run after thee to the odour of thy ointments." (*Cant.* i. 3.)

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

On the First Beatitude.

1st Point. Consider—"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (*Matt.* v. 3.) The first prerogative of the kingdom of heaven, is to be delivered from all earthly and temporal necessities. The wise man says, that "the substance of the poor is according to his heart." (*Eccles.* xxxviii. 20.) If he desire nothing, if he is content with little, and lives in peace, he is happy; but if he open his heart to covetousness, he becomes wretched. Evangelic poverty affords more convenience to those, than opulence to these, because the rich can never be satisfied, whilst the voluntary poor enjoy more than they desire. The virtue of poverty liberally furnishes the latter with all that is necessary, by removing all inordinate desires of possessing any thing. St. Ignatius says, that we should love poverty, as a mother, without whom we should be unhappy orphans. As patience is the remedy for all our evils, in like manner evangelic poverty provides for all our necessities. Poverty is no longer such when it is content; it becomes a species of beatitude resembling that of God himself, who essentially can need nothing, and in this resemblance it finds an abundance of all things.

2nd Point. Consider—the second prerogative of the kingdom of heaven, is an abundance of spiritual and eternal goods. The poor in spirit possess this advantage; for they are rich in all virtues, and abound in heavenly consolations. Poverty, says St. Chrysologus, has an eternal connexion with all the virtues. Poverty is their foundation, by which the acquisition of perfection becomes easy. The great virtues of the elect, says St. Gregory, are usually hidden, as treasures appertaining to God. He hides them in holy poverty,

and humility of spirit. Therefore no one is more rich than he who possesses these. He is infinitely rich who is poor with Jesus Christ: so rich that he makes no account of all the goods of the earth; but holds them in a generous contempt. He is truly rich, says St. Ambrose, who appears such in the eyes of God, in whose esteem the whole world is but a grain of sand; and he esteems only him as rich, who amasses, not temporal and perishable treasures, but eternal goods and treasures of virtue, which are invaluable. Heavenly consolations are the hundred fold of holy poverty, which it yields, as a fertile field to those who have renounced all; and these pure delights infinitely surpass all the perishable joys of the world. Could you behold the heart of a man, rich according to the world, you would find it pierced with a thousand goading cares; whilst the heart that is perfectly disengaged from the love of terrestrial goods, is proportionably filled with the grace, the peace, and the consolations of heaven. How excellent is the virtue of poverty, since it merits the possession of all the treasures of Paradise!

3rd Point. Consider—the third prerogative of the kingdom of heaven, is the possession of God, the sovereign and infinite good. The evangelic poor may be said to enjoy a similar privilege. For he who has renounced all for the love of God, receives as his recompense God himself. "What have I in heaven?" says the royal prophet, "and besides thee, what do I desire upon earth?" "Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion for ever." (*Ps.* lxxii. 6.) Had he reserved anything either in heaven or on earth, God had not been his inheritance. God alone, therefore, is the patrimony of the poor in spirit; if we desire to be partakers with them, we must endeavour to resemble them, that we may merit to possess, and be reciprocally possessed by him. Happy is he who can purchase Jesus Christ with the contempt of earthly

riches. And what can be more honourable to man, than to sell all he possesses to purchase Jesus Christ.

O my God! I now begin to understand how profitable and glorious is the title of poverty: the worldly man knows not its value. At this price I may purchase God, at this price he becomes my possession. Holy poverty is then always rich; and he fears not indigence, who possesses all things in the possession of God.

MONDAY.

On the Second Beatitude.

1st Point. Consider—"Blessed are the meek; for they shall possess the land," (*Matt.* v. 4); that is, the dominion of their own hearts. "Lo, the kingdom of God is within you," (*Luke*, xvii. 21); but those of a meek spirit alone shall enjoy its possession. "In your patience you shall possess your souls." (*Luke*, xxi. 19.) If you are not meek, if you will endure nothing, if you have not learned to overlook an injury, to support a defect, to suffer importunity or contempt, you possess nothing as your own, you belong not to yourself. When we begin to command ourselves, says St. Gregory, then we begin to possess our own hearts. He that offends a brother, says St. Chrysostom, wounds himself, and gives death to his own soul. Would you save yours? "Cease from anger, and leave rage; have no emulation to do evil. For evil doers shall be cut off, but they that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the land. For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be; and thou shalt seek his place, and shalt not find it. But the meek shall inherit the land, and shall delight in abundance of peace." (*Ps.* xxxvi. 8, *et seq.*)

2nd Point. Consider—"Blessed are the meek; for they shall possess the land;" that is, they shall rule

over the hearts and the affections of men. "My son, do thy works in meekness, and thou shalt be beloved above the glory of men." (*Eccles.* iii. 19.) This virtue is most essential for the preservation of charity, for appeasing dissensions, and for converting souls. A meek word can soften a heart of stone. The word of God, which is a heavenly seed, often falls fruitlessly on the earth. But a meek word remains not sterile, it always produces some fruit, even in the most obdurate heart. "A peaceable tongue is a tree of life," (*Prov.* xv. 4,) that bears most sweet fruit in every soil, and in all seasons. How then shall it penetrate the heart of God, which is the centre of goodness, since it has such power over the most insensible. "The prayer of the humble and the meek hath always pleased thee," (*Judith.* ix. 16,) said the pious Judith. The meek, says St. Ambrose, may truly be said to possess the hearts of terrestrial and mortal men, since they gain the heart of God himself, and he reciprocally possesses their hearts in peace.

3rd Point. Consider—"Blessed are the meek; for they shall possess the land;" that is, the heart of God, which may be termed the land of the living, the inheritance of the saints, "I believe," says David, "to see the good things of the Lord in the land of the living." (*Ps.* xxvi. 13.) But the meek already possess this privilege; they possess the land of the living, although sojourning in the region of death. They are under the protection of God, for, "to the meek he will give grace." (*Prov.* iii. 34.) "He will guide the mild in judgment; he will teach the meek his ways." (*Ps.* xxiv. 9.) "He will exalt the meek unto salvation." (*Ps.* cxlix. 4.) "But the meek shall inherit the land, and delight in abundance of peace." (*Ps.* xxxvi. 11.) The principal advantage of the blessed, is the peace and tranquillity in which they possess their happiness. Meek spirits resemble them, because nothing is capable of disturbing the peace of their soul. They remain calm

in the midst of contradictions; and whatever storm arise in their interior, they are neither disquieted nor impatient. Whether temptations cease or are renewed, they preserve equanimity in all vicissitudes. Their intimate union with Jesus Christ crucified, imparts to them an unalterable firmness. This happiness truly is rare, because there are few perfectly mortified, few who attain a union with God by prayer and contemplation of heavenly things, few who abandon themselves to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Endeavour to be of the small number; learn to suffer for Jesus Christ, and to bear meekly the afflictions of this life: thus shall you be of the number of the blessed.

TUESDAY.

On the Third Beatitude.

1st Point. Consider—"Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted." (*Matt.* v. 5.) "Blessed are they who mourn" for their own sins and those of the world; for they apply an easy remedy to a great evil Tears are a species of purgatory, says St. Chrysostom, that purify the soul from its stains. According to St. Gregory Nazianzen, they are a sacred deluge that drowns our offences. Tears are a second baptism, in which we are purified by contrition and confession, as in the sacrament of baptism by water and the Holy Ghost. Tears of compunction being the fruit of profound humility, shall enable the blessed mourners who have shed them, to appear fearlessly before the tribunal of the Judge, and impose silence on the accusers. Such tears overcome the Invincible, bind the Omnipotent, attract the Son of the Virgin, open heaven, and chase away the demons; in fine, they are a universal remedy for sin, and constitute the happiness of sinners.

Our Lord has said: "Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted." The tears of holy compunction are accompanied by an interior consolation indicative of the grace they obtain, and infinitely preferable to all worldly delights. For nothing is so sweet to the penitent sinner, as to weep his offences at the foot of the crucifix: such tears are changed in his regard into a source of spiritual peace and joy. You seek happiness, but seek it not where it is to be found. You seek it in dissipating amusements, in the gratification of sense and natural inclinations; but you deceive yourself. True happiness is to be found in tears of holy compunction shed in prayer, in examen of conscience, and confession of sins. In vain do you seek it elsewhere.

2nd Point. Consider—"Blessed are they that mourn" through fear of the judgments of God. "The heart of the wise is where there is mourning, and the heart of fools where there is mirth." (*Eccles.* vii. 5.) The saints frequently during life descended in spirit into hell, which is the abode of mourning, where there are tears without consolation, and evils without remedy or end. They sojourned there during a short time, lest they should be condemned to it for eternity. Who, says St. Bernard, will give water to my head, and a fountain of tears to my eyes, that I may prevent the weeping and gnashing of teeth, and the dismal lamentations of the reprobate? Could you understand the bitterness of those fruitless and eternal lamentations, could you behold that dreadful furnace which now you may extinguish by your tears, you would undoubtedly weep, and banish all those false, worldly joys, which are a bait to the devil to ensnare souls. Let us weep, says St. Ephrem, whilst God will yet receive our tears in satisfaction for our offences, lest having let pass the time of mercy, we should enter an eternity of woe, where remorse is unavailing, and tears without fruit

Here, one tear may extinguish all the flames of hell; there, an ocean of tears shall never extinguish a single spark.

3rd Point. Consider—"Blessed are they that mourn" through compassion and love towards Jesus Christ crucified. Do you thus compassionate his sufferings, and mingle your tears with his precious blood? Do you deplore the little fruit hitherto produced in your soul, by so many labours and cares employed for your sanctification? Do you regret the loss of so many graces rejected, so many degrees of glory lost by your indifference? Alas! you are inconsolable for a temporal loss, yet remain insensible to the loss of the gifts of heaven. Is it thus you should esteem the blood of Jesus Christ, his graces, his sufferings, and the example he has given you? Weep for your insensibility, and endeavour to rekindle your fervour. "Blessed are they that mourn" their exile, and sigh to behold Jesus Christ in his glory. "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." (*Ps.* cxxv. 5.) Seek not after joy that is earthly and fleeting, lest you be deprived of that which is heavenly and everlasting. The spirit of the world excites to vain joy; the spirit of Jesus Christ inspires compunction of heart. This is the daily bread without which spiritual life cannot be maintained. For as bread sustains the hungry, in like manner, tears of compunction nourish the soul. He that is hungry faints away if bread is wanting; and the soul becomes languid if she cannot weep. Beseech our Lord to grant you the spirit of compunction. You can obtain it by much prayer, and seeking it with profound humility. "He shall send out his word, and shall melt them; his wind shall blow, and the waters shall run." (*Ps.* cxlvii. 18.)

WEDNESDAY.

On the Fourth Beatitude.

1st Point. Consider—"Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall have their fill." (*Matt.* v. 6.) The first mark of spiritual advancement, and of the presence of the Holy Ghost in the heart, is zeal for the acquisition of justice. "For if thou shalt call for wisdom, and incline thine heart to prudence: if thou shalt seek her as money, and shalt dig for her as a treasure: then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and shalt find the knowledge of God." (*Prov.* ii. 3, 4, 5.) Who is the wise man that loves not this hunger and thirst, without which there is neither good understanding nor true wisdom? Would you know by what means you would arrive hereat? Attend to the words of Solomon: "The beginning of her is the most true desire of discipline. And the care of discipline is love:" for she cannot be loved without being known. And love is the keeping of her laws: "for he who loves me," says the Incarnate Wisdom, "keeps my commandments." "And the keeping of her laws is the firm foundation of incorruption:" for he who fulfils with joy the command of God, flies with horror whatever sullies the conscience; and this perfect purity draws man more closely to God. His eyes are so pure, that he cannot behold iniquity: the least stain therefore is an obstacle to an union with divine sanctity. "Therefore the desire of wisdom bringeth to the everlasting kingdom." (*Wisdom*, vi. 18, *et seq.*) Ascend by these steps if you would arrive at perfection, which is true wisdom.

2nd Point. Consider—zeal for the acquisition of justice, sweetens the bitterness, and obviates the difficulties encountered in spiritual life. "A soul that is full shall tread upon the honeycomb; and a soul that

is hungry shall take even bitter for sweet." (*Prov.* xxvii. 7.) According to venerable Bede, they who hunger and thirst after justice, taste sweetness in adversity, in sufferings and death itself for the service of God; because they know that the enjoyments of paradise can be attained only by the trials and afflictions of the present life. He that hungers after perfection, spares no pains, and refuses no labour in the practice of virtue. If the votaries of the world refuse no labour or fear no danger in its service, should not a thirst after justice have equal power in the hearts of the servants of Jesus Christ? If they have zeal for his glory, and love for perfection, should they not subdue their enemies, exterminate their vices, surmount all dangers, undergo all labours, and vanquish all that opposes their desire? Yes! if the desire of perfection be sincere, it will animate their courage, impart fortitude to support patiently all the sufferings of this life, and to subdue the flesh by voluntary mortification, either in atonement for past sins, to curb their passions, or to obtain some special grace either for themselves or others. In fine, when hunger and thirst after justice are vehement, they infuse a marvellous vigour for effecting all good works, replenish the soul with joy, and cause it to run on with alacrity in the service of God and the exercise of virtue.

3rd Point. Consider—an ardent zeal for the acquisition of justice, embraces all the beatitudes, and facilitates their enjoyment. It excites a love and desire of poverty, meekness, peace, compunction, purity of heart, the works of mercy, and endurance of suffering. This desirable hunger and thirst extends to all we should love and desire. Some suffer hunger and thirst on account of justice, others for its acquisition; both are blessed; these because they shall be satiated; those because the kingdom of heaven is their inheritance. Therefore, this desirable hunger replenishes with all

good, and satisfies every desire. How miserable, on the contrary, are they who are cold and indifferent to the attainment of virtue, attached only to the joys of the world and the pleasures of sense. What will be the end of such a life, so unworthy of a Christian? An eternal hunger and thirst. St. Bernard says, that such a life is the shadow of hell, because they approximate, as the shadow to the body. "They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment they go down to hell." (*Job*, xxi. 13.) They are therefore very near, since in a moment they may descend therein. Blinded men! who fear not to suffer thirst in eternal flames, provided they can satisfy themselves in this transitory life! And yet they shall not be satisfied; because the heart of a man is so vast, that God alone can perfectly satisfy and fill all its desires.

THURSDAY.

On the Fifth Beatitude.

1st Point. Consider—"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy." (*John*, v. 7.) By mercy, compassion, and charity towards your neighbour, you will correspond with the mercy of God in your regard, and repay him what you owe. "A needy man is merciful," (*Prov.* xxix. 22,) says Solomon, because, knowing the benefits he has received, and the mercy he stands in need of from God he would not be ungrateful. How deeply are you indebted to the divine clemency? How often has it withdrawn you from the abyss into which your sins had cast you? "Yea, I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore have I drawn thee, taking pity on thee." (*Jer.* xxxi. 3.) How often has it pardoned you after innumerable relapses? "He hath not dealt with us according to our sins: nor re-

warded us according to our iniquities." (*Ps.* cii. 10) Into how many dangers had you not fallen, if he had not saved you. "Who redeemeth thy life from destruction: who crowneth thee with mercy and compassion." (*Ps.* cii. 4.) With how many unmerited graces and benedictions has he prevented you? "For thou, O Lord, art sweet and mild: and plenteous in mercy to all that call upon thee." (*Ps.* lxxxv. 5.) What will you return to the Lord for all his favours? You can make him no return, but you can show mercy towards your brethren. Have compassion on their necessities, render to them what you owe to your common Lord and Father, he will receive it as done to himself.

2nd Point. Consider—by mercy and charity towards your brethren, you will imitate the mercy of your heavenly Father, and become like unto him. Be not content to exercise these virtues on a motive of gratitude and duty; let love and desire of expressing in yourself an image of the divine goodness be your paramount intention. "Put ye on therefore, as the elect of God, holy, and beloved, the bowels of mercy, benignity, humility, modesty, patience. Bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if any have a complaint against another. Even as the Lord hath forgiven you, so you also." (*Col.* iii. 12, 13.) This is the livery of Jesus Christ. He has a divine and a human heart; a heart of tenderness to compassionate the miserable, a heart of power to relieve their necessities. Admire and imitate his sweetness and bounty, for such is the characteristic of the true children of God. Their hearts are equally tender to compassionate their brother, and generous to support his weakness. Examine yourself on this point. Can you say with the Prophet Jeremiah: "My eyes have failed with weeping, my bowels are troubled: my liver is poured out upon the earth, for the destruction of the daughter of my people." (*Lam.* ii. 11.)

3rd Point. Consider—by mercy and charity towards your brethren, you will draw upon yourself the divine mercy. You have need of many things, which you can expect only from the gratuitous bounty of God. What have you merited but chastisement for your innumerable sins? Therefore you must have recourse to his mercy, especially for obtaining three things absolutely necessary for salvation: remission of past sins, grace to resist future temptations, and final perseverance, without which you can never obtain the crown of life. You can secure this mercy from God, by exercising compassion and charity towards your brethren. Your mercy will be the measure of the mercy of God towards you; and the good you labour to procure your brother will be the price of all the heavenly graces you hope to obtain. Do you fear the anger of your judge? Be merciful: "For judgment without mercy to him that hath not done mercy. And mercy exalteth itself above judgment." (*James*, ii. 13.) Do you fear the eternal chastisement your sins have so often merited? St. Augustine says, that mercy waits at the gates of hell, to prevent those who have loved her during life from being enclosed in the infernal dungeon. Do you fear death? "Alms deliver from all sin, and from death, and will not suffer the soul to go into darkness." (*Tobias*, iv. 11.) Our Saviour, in St. Matthew, declares, that a cup of cold water given to one of his little ones shall not lose its reward. Yes, with a trifling alms you may secure a heavenly throne.

My Lord Jesus Christ, God of infinite and everlasting mercy! to thee I owe this grace, and through thy aid alone I expect to obtain it, by the faithful observance of thy divine precept of mercy.

FRIDAY.

On the Sixth Beatitude.

1st Point. Consider—"Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God." (*Matt.* v. 8.) The sovereign beatitude of the present life is to be united to God by love. "But it is good for me to adhere to my God," (*Ps.* lxxii. 28,) says the royal Psalmist; and on the contrary, "for behold they that go far from thee shall perish." (*Ps.* lxxii. 27.) As purity of heart, proceeding from union with God, constitutes our present beatitude; so, on the contrary, a defiled conscience the consequence of inordinate attachment to creatures, is the sovereign evil of man even in the present life. The human heart, though vile in its nature, is refined and exalted by the infusion of divine love; but by attaching itself to created objects, which are unworthy its affections, it becomes still more degraded and defiled. The minister of religion, when offering the adorable sacrifice, admonishes us to *lift up our hearts.* Let us beware of suffering them to sink to the earth, for fear they become altogether terrestrial. Elevate your heart to heaven, says St. Augustine, lest it perish in the earth. Moreover your heart should be a heaven, where Jesus Christ dwells by a lively faith and ardent charity. It must therefore be as elevated above the vanities of the world, as the heavens are removed from the earth; if you desire the Holy One to reside therein. For Jesus Christ is an enemy to all that is defiled, he cannot endure the smallest stain. "Wisdom will not enter into a malicious soul, nor dwell in a body subject to sin"

2nd Point. Consider—"Blessed are the clean of heart," because the sovereign beatitude of the future life consists in beholding God. The clear vision of the divine essence is the source of all happiness, whence proceed love and joy, which replenish all the faculties

of the soul, and the light of glory that encompasses the body. In order to see God it is necessary that the heart be pure. You must purify the interior, says St Augustine, if you desire to behold this glorious sun. The Evangelist says, "Blessed are the clean of heart; for they shall see God." It is not permitted him who is defiled to touch that which is holy, much less to approach the source of all sanctity, which is God. Consequently nothing can exceed the misery of those whose heart is impure, because, of the heavenly Jerusalem it is said: "There shall not enter into it anything defiled." (*Apoc.* xxi. 27.) On the contrary, "Blessed are the clean of heart, because they shall see God" in the beatitude and light of glory, and already they behold him in contemplation by the light of faith. Reflect here on the happiness of the saints, and imprint this truth deeply in your mind; that the slightest stain will suffice to deprive you of the sight of God, until you have effaced it in the tears of repentance. As you should always hold yourself prepared to enjoy the sight of God, and should burn continually with an ardent desire to possess this happiness, so you should preserve your heart at all times free from the smallest stain. When then you commit any fault, or yield to any inordinate affection, imagine you hear God saying: You shall not behold me. Had you one spark of love, this threat would cause you to tremble. You should pray with the Psalmist, "Let my heart be undefiled in thy justifications, that I may not be confounded." (*Ps.* cxviii. 80.)

3rd Point. Consider—"Blessed are the clean of heart," because the sovereign beatitude both of the present and future life consists in being like unto God. The surest means of attaining this divine resemblance is to establish and preserve a perfect purity of heart If you labour diligently, by a well regulated life, to efface the stains that sully your interior purity you

will revive within you the lustre of the divine beauty. Purity of heart is the mirror of the divinity, representing the image of his beauty; if the pure of heart bear the image of God it is evident that a sullied conscience bears that of demoniacal deformity: consequently, as those are blessed, because they shall see God, these are miserable, because they shall only behold the horrible aspect of the demon. Enter now into your own interior, and reflect with attention on the state of your soul. Examine what image she bears. Are not inordinate passions, superfluous cares, unrestrained thoughts, affections, and attachments, the image impressed on your heart, rather than that of the Divinity? How have you defaced the beauty of that divine Original, to the likeness of which you were formed? Admire the infinite goodness of God, who patiently supports this irregularity. Weep for your ingratitude, infidelity, and negligence, and rekindle in your heart the love of piety and mortification, which will form and preserve the divine image therein.

SATURDAY.

On the Seventh Beatitude.

1st Point. Consider—"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." (*Matt.* v. 9.) Because peace is a fruit of grace, which renders us partakers of the divine nature. Do you desire to enjoy peace? Wash away your sins in your tears, and recover the grace lost through your own fault, to the end your heart may be delivered from the tumult of the passions, and the discord that sin has raised between God and you happily terminated. "O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments: thy peace had been as a river, and thy justice as the waves

of the sea." (*Isaiah*, xlviii. 18.) Deplore the loss of peace, but regret still more that of divine grace. Why are you troubled? Why complain of disquietude? "There is no peace for my bones." (*Ps.* xxxvii. 4.) Acknowledge the truth, it is "because of my sins." (*Ibid.*) It is sin has reduced you to this pitiable condition; "for if thou hadst walked in the way of God, thou hadst surely dwelt in peace for ever." (*Baruch*, iii. 13.) Return from your wanderings. "Being justified, therefore, by faith, let us have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." (*Rom.* v. 1.) Incline your heart to the practice of those virtues that preserve peace: love humility, meekness, silence, modesty, and all that serves to edify your brethren. "Let every one of you please his neighbour unto good, to edification, for Christ did not please himself." (*Rom.* xv. 2, 3.) "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but justice, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in this serveth Christ, pleaseth God, and is approved of men." (*Rom.* xiv. 17, 18.)

2nd Point. Consider—"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God," because they are animated by the spirit of his Son. "For whosoever are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God." (*Rom.* viii 14.) Such is the conduct of the peaceful. The love which they continually cultivate in themselves and others, is a sign of the presence of the Holy Ghost, who dwells in them. For he is the bond of peace between the Father and the Son, between God and man. "His place is in peace." (*Ps.* lxxv. 3.) His dwelling is in the heart of those who seek it; he directs and animates, imprinting in them the inclinations and sentiments of the true Son, the prince of peace and peace itself, according to St. Paul. For he possessed peace in himself by the most perfect harmony between the divine and human wills. He taught peace to men, according to St. Paul: "And coming, he preached peace

to you that are afar off, and peace to them that were nigh. (*Eph.* ii. 17.) He has purchased peace for us at the price of his precious blood; and through him we have access to the Father, no longer as strangers, but as domestics and children. In fine, he has gratuitously given us that peace which he purchased at an inestimable price. He has given it as the fruit of his victories, the pledge of his love, and as a precious deposit, for the faithful guardianship of which he has promised an eternal recompense. Adore the infinite goodness of God, who has sought us by a preventing grace, and delivered his well beloved Son to the death of the cross, that our peace might be established in the blood of that Immaculate Lamb. Do you desire to be of the number of the adoptive children of God? Imitate his only begotten Son. Love peace, preserve it as a precious treasure, and use every effort to cement it amongst your brethren.

3rd Point. Consider—"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God," because they are his heirs. Peace is a commenced beatitude: and beatitude, the inheritance of the children of God, is consummate peace. Next to the grace of God, peace is the most desirable of all goods. A good surpassing all that can be imagined, which is the property of beatitude. "The peace of God, which surpasseth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." (*Phil.* iv. 7.) There are three ways in which peace surpasses our understanding. According to St. Ambrose, he who has peace with God, fears not the machinations of men. Theophilact says, the means through which Jesus Christ has imparted peace, surpasses the comprehension of angels or men. For what mind, whether human or angelic, can conceive the excess of that goodness by which he abases himself to the death of the cross. Finally, because no one can understand the value of peace, or the recompense

reserved in heaven for the peaceful Those, therefore, are most unhappy, whose insatiable desires prevent their enjoying peace! Such are the lovers of the world, for they can never be satisfied. Give thanks to God for the grace that has withdrawn you from its slavery. What peace would you enjoy did you seek God alone! Therefore, renounce all things, renounce yourself, give all things to purchase peace, it will render you happy in time and eternity.

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

On the Eighth Beatitude.

1st Point. Consider—"Blessed are they who suffer persecution for justice sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (*Matt.* v. 10.) "Blessed are ye when they shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for my sake: be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven." (*Matt.* v. 11, 12.) St. Peter, following these sentiments of his master, testified his esteem for sufferings endured in the cause of God. "If you be reproached for the name of Christ, you shall be blessed; for that which is of the honour, glory, and power of God, and that which is his Spirit, resteth upon you." (1 *Pet.* iv. 14.) And again, "If doing well you suffer patiently; this is thanksworthy before God. For unto this you are called." (1 *Pet.* ii. 20, 21.) St. Chrysostom says, that to be in bonds for Jesus Christ, is more than to be an apostle, doctor, or evangelist. He that ardently loves Jesus Christ, would rather suffer for his sake than enter into heaven. The apostles returning from the council, where they had been ignominously scourged, were filled with joy for being judged worthy to suffer opprobrium for the name of Jesus. St. Ignatius, the martyr, writes:

"I desire to suffer, but I know not whether I be worthy." And St. Jerome says: "I give thanks to my God, that I am considered worthy to be hated by the world." St. Anthony, while assisting the martyrs, complains, although burning with an ardent desire to suffer for Jesus Christ, that he is refused the crown of martyrdom. How weak is your love for Jesus Christ, and how far removed are you from this ardent desire of suffering for his sake!

2nd Point. Consider—"Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice sake." It is a great happiness to suffer in imitation of Jesus Christ, and to be partakers in his cross. "But if you partake of the sufferings of Christ, rejoice." (1 *Pet.* iv. 13.) "O good cross," exclaimed St. Andrew, "long have I desired thee; now thou art prepared to satisfy the burning desires of my soul, I receive thee with security and joy." He receives it, says St. Bernard, not only with patience, but with an ardent affection; he embraces torments as delights, and sufferings as a triumph. He considers the cross as a throne of honour, because it has been consecrated with the blood of Jesus Christ. You also should glory in the cross, as in the highest degree of happiness and honour. For what greater honour can be imagined than to resemble Jesus Christ, to bear the marks of royal dignity, saying with St. Paul: "I bear the marks of the Lord Jesus in my body." (*Gal.* vi. 17.) I display them as a glorious trophy. "It is a great glory to follow the Lord." (*Eccles.* xxiii. 28.) Follow him, therefore, even to the cross; you follow him not alone; he is accompanied by a host of martyrs; but though all were to forsake him, be not so faint-hearted as to abandon him. Say to him in the sincerity of your heart: "I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." (*Luke*, ix. 5, 7.) If you have not courage to ask the cross, at least be faithful in accepting it; then you may say with St. Ignatius, I now begin to be a disciple of Christ; for he would

not recognise you as such, unless you enter the school of the cross.

3rd Point. Consider—"Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." "Yet so if we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him." (*Rom.* viii. 17.) Be not surprised or consider it extraordinary, if God try you in the fire of afflictions. "But if you partake of the sufferings of Christ, rejoice that when his glory shall be revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy." (1 *Pet.* iv. 13.) "Knowing that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so shall you be also of the consolation." (2 *Cor.* i. 7.) When you are visited by any severe affliction, remember that it is for Jesus Christ you suffer. Remember also that he has suffered more for you; that his example should animate your zeal; that he has rendered the cross honourable and precious by anointing it with his sacred blood. Receive therefore with respect the cross he presents you; and if its weight presses heavily, say generously: O good cross, consecrated by the sufferings of my Master, thou art dear and precious! Remember also that you suffer for heaven; and use as a buckler the words of the prophet Isaiah, whence St. Paula drew spiritual consolations in her afflictions, according to the relation of St. Jerome: "You who have been weaned from the breast, expect affliction upon affliction, hope upon hope." For hope is proportioned to suffering; the more you suffer the greater will be your recompense. Examine with what disposition you bear the cross, and judge thence what shall be your crown.

MONDAY.

On Jesus giving his malediction to those who are happy according to the world.

1st Point. Consider—"But woe to you that are rich: for you have your consolation." (*Luke*, vi. 24.) The apparent happiness which the rich of this world enjoy shall be the only recompense of the trivial acts of virtue they may have performed, and when they are presented before the tribunal of retributive justice, it shall be said to them, as to the rich man mentioned in the Gospel: "Remember that thou didst receive good things in thy life-time." (*Luke*, xvi. 25.) Your sufferings are reserved for eternity. Earthly and transitory comforts, succeeded by everlasting woe, is the lot awarded to the rich; on the contrary, passing afflictions and never-ending happiness, constitute that of the poor in spirit. Which is the more desirable? Far from envying the worldly rich, the poor of Jesus Christ should unceasingly bless the mercy that has delivered them from the dangers inseparable from worldly prosperity. Riches are not in themselves a subject of condemnation, but are too frequently a mark of reprobation, because they entail dangerous occasions which it is difficult to surmount. Our Lord, says St. Ambrose, condemns not the possession, but the abuse of riches. However, the snares of riches are so dangerous, that to escape them requires almost a miracle of grace.

2nd Point. Consider—"Woe to you that now laugh; for you shall mourn and weep." (*Luke*, vi. 25.) The joy of the world, says Hugh of St. Victor, proceeds from terrestrial pleasures; that of a Christian arises from the testimony of a good conscience; the joy of the Lord consists in the possession of eternal happiness. Of worldly joy the wise man says: "Laughter I counted error, and to mirth I said: why art thou vainly de-

ceived?" (*Eccles.* ii. 2.) Those, says St. Augustin, who weep for that which is vain, weep fruitlessly; but they who love and seek vain joy, laugh at their own misfortune; for "laughter shall be mingled with sorrow, and mourning taketh hold of the end of joy." (*Prov.* xiv. 13.) Unhappy they who rejoice in that which is truly a cause of sorrow, and who mistake thorns for delights. Still more unhappy, when in the end this mistaken joy shall be changed into bitterness and fruitless tears, and shall terminate in woe that can never find consolation. St. Basil observes, that Jesus Christ having pronounced a malediction on those that "now laugh," it is evident the faithful can have no subject of real joy, whilst they live in the midst of crimes by which God is continually offended, and that call for bitter and unceasing tears. Would you know the only joy a Christian can feel in this life? It is contained in the admonition of the apostle: "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice." (*Phil.* iv. 4.) Let your joy therefore be in the Lord, and not in the world. For as no man can serve two masters, so no one can at the same time rejoice according to God and according to the world; for these joys are contrary and incompatible.

3rd Point. Consider—"Woe to you when men shall bless you: for according to these things did their fathers to the false prophets." (*Luke*, vi. 26). The vain applause of creatures is the false recompense with which the world is accustomed to repay its votaries. The day will come when the deceitful words with which this ungrateful master now flatters, shall be changed into a thousand maledictions. Ambition not the praise of men, and shun the vice of flattery; for you know not what may occur to-morrow. Oftentimes the first become the last, and the last, on the contrary, may become the first. Fly praise as a poison, lest it deceive you, and destroy the merit of your good actions. They are vain and foolish who take pleasure in the flatteries

of men. Praise is a tribute due only to God, not to a frail and sinful creature. In praising God you cannot fear to be deceived. When then can praise be rendered without danger? Only when you are secure that he whom you praise will not contradict it in his conduct—when charity calls for the defence of the absent—when the cause of religion may be advanced through the good repute of another, without injury to the individual himself, and therefore if possible in his absence—when you want to render reproof or correction effective and profitable to the weak, by admitting the possession of other good qualities in the individual you are endeavouring to reform; in a word, when death has stopped the ear against the seductive voice of flattery, and given an immortality which the breath of man cannot destroy. But like all the other offices of speech, you must entreat the special light of the Holy Spirit for its proper discharge, begging of him, with the Royal Psalmist, to place a door to your mouth, that you may not offend in words.

TUESDAY.

On the words of Jesus: "You are the salt of the earth."

1st Point. Consider—"You are the salt of the earth." (*Matt.* v. 13.) "Salt is good." (*Mark*, ix. 49.) This may be applied to apostolic men, animated by the spirit of Jesus Christ. Human nature in its fallen state, has lost the relish of virtue; humility, poverty, and penance, it esteems bitter; but the salt of evangelic doctrine renders them sweet and agreeable. All the inclinations of corrupt nature tend to evil; but the heavenly wisdom which apostolic men teach, corrects these disorders, and inspires a holy hatred for whatever can sully the human heart. Before the Son of God had imparted this heavenly doctrine, the earth remained

sterile of good works, and produced only the thorns of vice; but since he has, by the voice of his Apostles, published to mankind the wisdom of the cross, the barren desert has become fruitful, and the thorns of sin being destroyed, give place to the flowers and fruits of every Christian virtue. How should you esteem a vocation, by which the Son of God has chosen you, not only to continue the mission of the Apostles, but even to co-operate in the same work of redeeming charity, that drew himself down from the bosom of his heavenly Father, and nailed him to the gibbet of the cross? What thanksgiving will you render for a grace so unmerited on your part? Will you not give yourself without reserve to him who has called you, and renew your resolution to correspond henceforth more faithfully with the grace of your vocation? What purity of heart should you not possess, since you are called to purify the hearts of others? What sanctity should you not have acquired, who are destined for the sanctification of your brethren?

2nd Point. Consider—"But if the salt lose its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is good for nothing any more, but to be cast out, and trodden on by men." (*Matt.* v. 13.) This may be applied to those whom Jesus Christ has chosen for the conversion of souls, if they lose the spirit of faith, and relent in the fervor of charity. They become useless in their vocation, and although they esteem themselves wise, they are in effect under a lamentable blindness. And although they should be profitable to others, "what shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his soul?" (*Mark*, viii. 39.) Undoubtedly they merit "to be cast out, and to be trodden on by men," since being called by their vocation to the conversion of sinners, they suffer themselves to be perverted, and instead of rendering others holy and devoted to the service of God, become themselves, by imbibing the

contagion of bad example, proud, sensual, and indifferent to the divine honour. Moreover, it is difficult to rekindle the fire of devotion in one that has fallen from his first fervor; for "if the salt lose its savour, wherewith shall it be salted?" If he that should instruct others falls into error, who shall admonish or disabuse him? One fervent servant of God, burning with zeal for his honour, according to St. J. Chrysostom, would suffice to convert thousands of sinners, and inflame them with the fire of divine love; but if he relent in his fervor, thousands of saints would not suffice to rekindle his first charity. Guard against so deceitful a misfortune. Labour for your own sanctification, if you would become useful to your neighbour. Have recourse to prayer, and beseech God, that whilst you labour for the salvation of others, you may not "become a cast-away."

3rd Point. Consider—"Have salt in you, and have peace among you." (*Mark*, ix. 49.) "Have salt in you," that is, evangelic wisdom, before you can distribute it to others You must relish the things of heaven, before you can draw others to desire them. "Have salt in you," that is, a spirit of mortification. "Whatsoever sacrifice thou offerest, thou shalt season it with salt." (*Lev.* ii 13.) Your sacrifices cannot be agreeable to God, unless they proceed from a heart perfectly mortified. "Let your speech be always in grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer every man." (*Col.* iv. 6.) "Have salt in you," that is, perseverance and stability in the love of God and your neighbour. "It is a covenant of salt for ever before the Lord, to thee and thy sons." (*Num.* xviii. 19.) The Son of God says, that the fire of hell shall be as salt, rendering the reprobate incorruptible in their torments: "For every one shall be salted with fire; and every victim shall be salted with fire." (*Mark*, ix 48.) If you would be preserved from this woful calamity, let the fire of charity burn incessantly in your heart, and as

the salt which preserves you from the corruption of the world, it will also confirm you in the unremitting exercise of purity and virtue

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WEDNESDAY.

On the words of Jesus: "You are the Light of the World."

1st Point. Consider—"You are the light of the world." (*Matt* v. 14.) In order to labour usefully for the salvation of souls, it suffices not to speak well of divine matters; the light of good example is still more necessary. To save a soul is to contribute in some degree to its redemption, in accomplishing, as the Apostle says, what is wanting on our part of the sufferings of Jesus Christ, that we may apply its fruit. For this end words do not suffice: a soul is of too great value; it has cost the Son of God a great price. Like him you should give your blood, if you would fulfil the office of saviour. You must weep, pray, sigh, and draw from the treasury of your good works, mortifications and labours wherewith to purchase what is so precious. "Set aside with you first fruits to the Lord." (*Exodus*, xxxv. 5.) Think not he will be satisfied with words, he demands works. To save a soul is not merely to point out the way to heaven; it is carefully to seek it in its wanderings, patiently to await its delays, meekly to support its defects, charitably to relieve its weakness, and bear it, like the good shepherd, on your shoulders, after having withdrawn it from the way of perdition. Thus has the Saviour of the world, the true guide to eternity, acted towards his elect. Look upon this divine model; unite yourself intimately with him by love and resemblance. The salvation of souls is his work; you are but the instrument that acts by the power of his omnipotent hand.

2nd Point. Consider—those words of David: "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O thou most mighty. Thy arrows are sharp: under thee shall people fall." (*Ps.* iv. 6) This victorious sword is the Incarnate Word, and these arrows are the exemplary virtues he practised during his mortal life. The Prophet attributes a signal advantage to virtues and good works. For the sword strikes only that which is near, but the arrow flies and wounds afar off. Words sound in the ear, example penetrates the heart. "With thy comeliness and thy beauty, set out, proceed prosperously and reign. Because of truth, and meekness, and justice, and thy right hand shall conduct thee wonderfully. (*Ps.* xliv. 5.) To understand the sense of these words, observe the remark of St. Augustin, that the just form a chosen world, the elements whereof are examples of all the virtues Against these the vices of the reprobate world wage an unrelenting war. The virtues of the just, as glowing coals lighted at the fire of charity, rekindle tepid souls, meekly reproaching them: can you not do what many, weak as you, have done? But at the day of judgment these flames of divine love shall be changed into the devouring fire of the wrath of God, to consume sinners, who will be confounded, by a judgment of comparison, proving their crimes to be without excuse, since so many others, exposed to the same temptations, have courageously vanquished them. This consideration should oblige you to the practice of every virtue, in order to draw many others, by your example, to the service of God; and that you may one day justify his providence, in convincing sinners that *their perdition is from themselves.*

3rd Point. Consider—God has sent his divine Son, the Increated Wisdom, and the Holy Ghost, the spirit of his love; the one to impart the knowledge of evangelic perfection, the other to facilitate its practice. Good example accomplishes both these objects To

make man understand, that to save his life he must lose it, that the poor are blessed, the lowliest on earth the most exalted in heaven, that there is pleasure in renouncing the delights of the world—to inculcate such truths with effect, all the eloquence of orators and the science of doctors, are not so convincing as one good work. "So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." (*Matt.* v. 16.) Thus does good example hold the place of the Incarnate Wisdom, and also that of the Holy Spirit, rendering the evangelic truths, not only intelligible, but also easy of practice. The evangelic laws seem austere according to the letter; but when exemplified in the practice of the saints, they are accompanied ith an unction, that renders the remembrance of their virtues a part of our happiness. Judge hence of your obligation to lead an exemplary life, and edify your neighbour by the modesty and sanctity of your demeanour. "Be thou an example of the faithful, in word, in conversation, in charity, in faith, in chastity." (1 *Tim.* iv. 12.) You owe this to the honour of your vocation, to the salvation of your brethren for whom you are responsible; you owe it to the glory of God and your own salvation: for if your life correspond not with your words, "out of thy own mouth I judge thee, thou wicked servant." (*Luke*, xix. 22.)

THURSDAY.

On Jesus declaring he has come to accomplish the Law.

1st Point. Consider—"Do not think that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." (*Matt.* v 17.) Jesus Christ is come to fulfil all the sacrifices of the law. According to St. Paul: "the law brought nothing to perfection.

but a bringing in of a better hope, by which we draw nigh to God." (*Heb.* vii. 19.) This better hope Jesus Christ has given in fulfilling the law. He has accomplished all the sacrifices of the law, which were but figures of that of the cross. The victims of the ancient testament typified Jesus Christ, who is the victim of the world, but they possess not virtue to satisfy the justice of God. They were in themselves but meagre and unprofitable oblations; all their merit depended on the blood of the Lamb, who *taketh away the sins of the world.* He is the true heavenly victim that has appeased the wrath of God. His death is a perfect sacrifice, and his body a holocaust consummated on the cross, and which has accomplished all the other sacrifices. Can you truly say you are a holocaust, a perfect victim, consumed for the glory of your only Mediator, who for your sake humbled himself even to the death of the cross? He has spared, he has reserved nothing! He has given you all! Do you give yourself without reserve to him? Do you spare nothing? Do you labour with all your strength in his service? Acknowledge rather that you are a worthless and imperfect victim, and beseech the divine Saviour, who has come to fulfil all the sacrifices of the law, that he would perfect that which you this day offer, and grant your life may be a perpetual holocaust consecrated to his honour, and consumed in the fire of his love.

2nd Point. Consider—Jesus Christ is come to accomplish the sacraments of the law. These ceremonies, disunited from his merits, were but weak elements, incapable of justifying or of restoring the life which the first Adam had forfeited, had not our divine Adam renewed our spirit, and animated us with new fervor for the exercise of all virtues. "If then any be in Christ a new creature, the old things are passed away, behold all things are made new" (2 *Cor.* v. 17.) According to St. Gregory: The new man is come into the world,

he has given to the world new precepts, he has opposed to the life of the old man his new life, which is entirely contrary to the former. Hence you may discover whether you belong to Jesus Christ, if you profit by the sacraments, the living sources of grace. Do you live according to the spirit of the old man? Do you follow the maxims of the world? Is your life still sensual, animal, terrestrial, and worldly? If so, you belong not to Jesus Christ, you oppose obstacles to his grace, the sacraments operate not in your heart, and you have cause to fear that you receive them unworthily, or at least bring not the necessary dispositions for drawing an abundant fruit. Reflect hereon, and form the resolution of leading henceforth a new life.

3rd Point. Consider—Jesus Christ is come to accomplish the law, by observing its most rigorous precepts. Not content with explaining, he sweetens and perfects, by adding thereto the evangelic counsels, and giving an example of perfect obedience, by performing more than he has commanded. "In the head of the book it is written of me that I should do thy will: O my God, I have desired it, and thy law, in the midst of my heart." (*Ps.* xxxix. 8, 9.) Thus speaks the Son of God. He walks in the way of the commandments at the head of the elect. Do you follow in his footsteps? Are his precepts engraven in your heart, and frequently on your lips? Jesus Christ accomplishes the promises, and also the menaces of the law, by bearing the penalty incurred by its violation, and by rewarding liberally its faithful observance; again, by changing the temporary recompenses of the ancient law into those which are eternal, and eternal chastisement into temporal pains, in favour of penitents. What gratitude do we owe to Jesus Christ, who has not only merited for us an everlasting reward, if we observe his law with fidelity and affection; but also promises, that he himself will be our "reward exceeding great!" (*Gen.* xv. 1.)

O God of infinite bounty, thy promises exceed all I could expect, or even imagine. Yet miserable and unworthy as I am, nothing less than thyself can satisfy the longing desires of my heart.

FRIDAY.

On punctuality in observing little things

1st Point. Consider—"He therefore that shall break one of these least commandments, and shall so teach men, shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven." (*Matt.* v. 19.) There is nothing unimportant, nothing to be contemned in the service of God. "He that contemneth small things, shall fall by little and little." Vices increase "by little and little," and we fall insensibly into grievous faults when neglectful of the least offences. These fortify our passions, weaken the vigour of the mind, and oppose obstacles to the grace of God, by the contempt of his law. Hence the excellent maxim of Slavien: "Nothing should be esteemed trifling that displeases God." He that despises the lesser graces of God, merits to be deprived of greater. Our diligence in co-operating with those, is ordinarily the measure of his liberality: "For he that hath, to him shall be given, and he shall abound; but he that hath not, from him shall be taken away that also which he hath." (*Matt.* xiii. 12.) He that neglects the practice of mortification and virtue in little things, can never make great progress in perfection. If you have not courage to overcome yourself in that which is easy, how shall you do it in what is more difficult? No one becomes perfect at once; but as from little faults we fall into great, so by the practice of small virtues we ascend to the heroic. Heavenly treasures can only be acquired by assiduous care, and an application that neglects nothing.

2nd Point. Consider—there is nothing, however inconsiderable, that God will not accept, and liberally recompense, when performed for his service and glory. This good Master, who weighs all things in a just balance, rejects not our least gifts; his infinite charity, regardless of their value, receives them favourably, considering only the heart and affection with which they are offered. What more valueless than a drop of water or a crumb of bread? Yet with these the rich man could have redeemed his sins, and rendered himself pleasing to God. With a drop of water he could have extinguished the flames of hell; he could have purchased heaven with a crumb of bread, and he is lost for having omitted such trifling acts. What is weaker than a hair? Yet the spouse says: "Thou hast wounded my heart with one hair of thy neck." (*Cant.* iv. 9.) A sigh, a good sentiment, a light mortification, suffices to wound the heart of the divine spouse of our souls. There is not a thought, an affection, a good work, however inconsiderable, that is not written in the book of life. "How many loaves have you," (*Mark*, vi. 38,) says Jesus Christ to his disciples, when he miraculously multiplied the bread. He whose liberal hand produces and multiplies these loaves, inquires the number that are given him; because he makes account of, and desires to recompense each in particular. Wherefore do not excuse yourself on the ground of poverty. Your offering, however poor, will not fail to be acceptable, provided it proceeds from a generous heart.

3rd Point. Consider—"For amen I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot, or one tittle shall not pass of the law, till all be fulfilled." (*Matt.* v. 18.) Reflect on the example the Son of God gives as to the exactitude with which you should observe even the least rules of the gospel. With good reason has St. Paul said: "God sent his Son, made of a woman, made under the law." (*Gal.* iv. 4.) Meditate attentively, and en-

leavour to penetrate the sense of these words—Jesus submissive to the law, Jesus teaching the law, Jesus perfecting the law, Jesus adding the counsels to the law, Jesus meriting for you grace to accomplish the law, even to the least point, the least word, the least circumstance. Form yourself on this model; accomplish perfectly all the evangelic counsels and your own particular obligations. "Thou hast commanded thy commandments to be kept most diligently. O! that my ways may be directed to keep thy justifications. Then shall I not be confounded, when I shall look into all thy commandments. I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned the judgments of thy justice. I will keep thy justifications: O! do not thou utterly forsake me." (*Ps.* cviii. 4, *et seq.*)

SATURDAY.

On the obligation of tending to perfection.

1st Point. Consider—"Unless your justice abound more than that of the scribes and pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." (*Matt.* v. 20.) "Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect," says Jesus Christ. (*Matt.* v. 48.) God is impeccable; the Christian is obliged to imitate him by an absolute renunciation of mortal, and in as much as human frailty will permit, of venial sin. "Whosoever is born of God committeth not sin." (1 *John*, iii. 9.) "Therefore take unto you the armour of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and to stand in all things perfect." (*Eph.* vi. 13.) God is holy in all his works, fruitful in his operations, and munificent in the communication of his benefits even to his enemies. The Christian must imitate him by rendering his good purposes efficacious, his conversation useful, and all his

labours profitable for the general good, animating his actions with a pure intention necessary for their perfection. God finds in the love and contemplation of his own divine perfections an infinite happiness and unalterable repose. The Christian should imitate him in raising by faith and love, above all created objects, and uniting himself to the sovereign good, the centre of his repose, out of which he is exposed to all the violence of his passions. Thus is God thrice holy. Holy in his impeccability, holy in his works, holy in the knowledge and love of himself. He desires that you also be thrice holy and blessed by the imitation of his perfections. When will you arrive at this divine resemblance? When will you correspond with your exalted vocation, and the sublime perfection your state demands?

2nd POINT. Consider—a Christian is obliged to tend to perfection by virtue of his baptism. That sacrament unites him to Jesus Christ as a member of his mystic body, animated by his spirit. The spirit of Jesus, which is that of sanctity, impels continually towards perfection, and whosoever feels not the virtue of this impelling principle is a dead member united to a living body. As the circumcised under the ancient law were obliged to the observance of its precepts, those who receive the sacrament of baptism are obliged to fulfil the law of grace, a law excluding all evil, and teaching the perfection of every virtue. Baptism regenerates to a spiritual life, and implies an obligation of increasing daily in Christian perfection, according to that of the apostle: "As newborn babes desire the rational milk without guile, that thereby you may grow unto salvation." (1 *Pet.* ii. 2.) Again the Christian is obliged to tend to perfection, in virtue of the sacrament of confirmation, which the Son of God has established for all the faithful, because he desires not only that all be saved, but that all be perfect. "Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect." According to St. Thomas, he who

receives a supernatural life in baptism, receives also in confirmation the grace of increasing in sanctity, until he attains Christian perfection, that is, the perfect imitation of Jesus Christ. In confirmation he is made the soldier of Christ, and strengthened to combat the enemies of faith and piety, among which the most dangerous are, a fear and shame of appearing the servants of a crucified God, the imitators of his humility, poverty, patience, sufferings, and death. Therefore he is signed with the cross, that he may say with St. Paul: "I am not ashamed of the Gospel." (*Rom.* i. 16.) I glory in pardoning injuries, suffering contempt, and practising all the maxims of the Son of God.

3rd POINT. Consider—a Christian is obliged to tend to perfection in virtue of the most holy sacrament of the altar, which is in a peculiar manner the sacrament of our sanctification. From this throne of his love the Saviour of the world says to all the faithful: I am the food of great ones, grow and you shall feed on me; yet so thou shalt not change me into thee, but thou shalt be changed into me. Grow in humility, for I am the bread of the evangelic poor, who despise the pomp and vanities of the world. Grow in fortitude and courage, for I am the bread of the strong, who generously surmount all the difficulties to be encountered in my service. Grow in mortification, for I am the bread of kings, who hold their passions under the empire of reason, and who find in me ineffable delights. Grow in fervour and love, for I am the bread of children, who observe the commands of their Father, neither through servile fear nor interested hope, but through a spirit of pure love, and desire of pleasing him. Grow in all virtues, for I am sovereignly holy, and the example I give you in this mystery, is a model of that perfection to which you are bound to aspire. Let your obedience be unlimited as my power over you is infinite; and your gratitude unbounded as my liberality. Spare

nothing in my service, since I have spared nothing for your salvation.

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

On the obligation of avoiding the least faults against charity.

1st Point. Consider—"But I say to you, that whosoever is angry with his brother, shall be in danger of the judgment." (*Matt.* v. 22.) Anger renders a man incapable of good counsel; because it troubles the mind, and so obscures reason, as to conceal from it the rays of the Sun of Justice Therefore the wise man admonishes: "Be not quickly angry; for anger resteth in the bosom of a fool." (*Eccles* vii. 10.) "Let every man be swift to hear, but slow to speak, and slow to anger. For the anger of man worketh not the justice of God." (*James*, i. 19, 20.) Anger is unworthy a reasonable man; it robs him of the gravity and propriety that should always mark his conduct In fine, this vice destroys the peace of the soul, and fills the heart with bitterness. If you are subject to this passion, be watchful to chase from your heart all bitterness and impetuosity; have recourse to the sacred heart of Jesus in the most holy sacrament, to draw thence meekness and tranquillity of spirit. How shameful to be so easily provoked to anger, after receiving so frequently that meek Lamb, who treats you with such compassionate charity, and pardons your repeated offences with such infinite bounty.

2nd Point. Consider—"And whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council." (*Matt.* v. 22.) For, according to St. John, "he that loveth not, abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother, is a murderer." (*John*, iii. 14, 15.) For he

that hates his brother, although he deprive him not of life, inflicts eternal death on his own soul. "I am troubled at the voice of the enemy, and at the tribulation of a sinner. For they have cast iniquities upon me, and in wrath they were troublesome to me. My heart is troubled within me, and the fear of death is fallen upon me." (*Ps.* liv. 3, 4, 5.) He calls the hatred of our neighbour death. St. Jerome, in the same sentiment, says: "Who shall possess the kingdom of God, since he is excluded that is angry with his brother?" Hence, concludes St. Augustin, the man that hates another, does himself a greater injury than the cruellest enemy could inflict. Beware then of retaliating evil, on the contrary, return blessings for maledictions, that you may inherit the blessing of your heavenly Father. "Bless them that persecute you: bless, and curse not." (*Rom.* xii. 14.) Imitate the admirable silence with which the Son of God endures the outrages and irreverence committed against him in the most holy sacrament, and who exercises this astonishing patience, to oblige you to follow his example.

3rd Point. Consider—"And whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire." (*Matt.* v. 22.) He that wounds charity, offends not merely man, but God himself, whether in banishing him from his heart, or outraging and dishonouring him in his image, or in tearing a member from his body that he cherishes more than life. Learn from what he says in the gospel, the necessity of a prompt reconciliation with your neighbour. "If, therefore, thou offer thy gift at the altar, and there thou remember that thy brother hath anything against thee, leave there thy offering before the altar, and go first to be reconciled with thy brother: and then coming, thou shalt offer thy gift." (*Matt.* v. 24, 25.) Ineffable charity of God towards man! says St. Chrysostom; he abandons the care of his own honour to secure fraternal charity. Quit, he says, the

worship you are going to render me, that you may be re-established in charity; your reconciliation with your brethren will be to me instead of sacrifice. Have recourse to the eucharistic victim of charity, that you may draw from the furnace of his divine heart a living flame that will rekindle that virtue within your own. In the adorable sacrament is the essential charity, as he is named in the scripture. He is charity itself, whose love for you bears a proportion to that which he bears himself, and who desires to animate your heart with a reciprocal charity, that in loving him you may also love your brethren in him, and for his sake.

O heart of Jesus! thou hast bled upon the cross to form a covenant of peace between heaven and earth. May thy precious blood, which thou mystically sheddest on the altar, and offerest to thy heavenly Father in our behalf, increase daily in the hearts of thy children a mutual and inviolable charity.

MONDAY.

On the love of our enemies.

1st Point. Consider—"You have heard that it has been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thy enemy. But I say to you, love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you." (*Matt.* v. 43, 44.) Jesus Christ commands us to love our enemies, under pain of incurring his displeasure. It is not a simple counsel, but an indispensable precept. Had we a spark of true faith, a command would not be requisite to quell vindictive feelings: it would suffice to remember that we are the children of a Father the most meek and charitable, who makes his sun to rise on the good and the bad; that we have been baptized in the blood of

the Immaculate Lamb, in order that we might imitate his meekness; are styled the brethren of Jesus Christ, whose divine person is the principle of love, and whose incarnation is the fruit of mercy, by which he has descended on earth for the remission of sins; in fine, that the children of God should have the simplicity of the dove, that is, should be free from gall and bitterness, and that to the demons alone it belongs to exercise an undying and implacable hatred. But as Christians have degenerated, and grown cold in charity, the Son of God is constrained to change the quality of father into that of master and judge, that he may force our rebellious wills to bend under the authority of his word.

2nd Point. Consider – Jesus Christ, who commands us to love our enemies, is our sovereign Lord and God, who died to redeem us while we were yet his enemies. The world commands us to risk fortune and life for a point of honour, and is obeyed. The devil commands to hazard salvation, and meets no resistance. The Creator enjoins the love of enemies, and his precept is disregarded. "Remember the covenant of the Most High, and overlook the ignorance of thy neighbour." (*Eccles.* xxviii. 9.) Remember the alliance that God has formed with men, whom he loves and cherishes as his members; and consequently when you offend your brethren, you insult God in them. Remember the compact he has made to act towards you, as you shall have acted towards your brethren. Finally, remember his precept—"Love your enemies." He commands as judge, under pain of eternal death. Awful chastisement! the thought of which should stifle every sentiment of anger or revenge. But when Jesus Christ commands the love of enemies, he offers, at the same time, abundant grace for its accomplishment. If this grace remains fruitless, accuse the obduracy of your own heart. Did you consider with the eye of faith, the everlasting reward that God has promised to those who

pardon injuries for his sake, far from shunning, you would desire and seek opportunities of exercising that virtue. You would esteem injuries as benefits, an enemy as a benefactor, and an occasion of suffering as an inestimable favour.

3rd Point. Consider—Jesus Christ, who commands us to love our enemies, has first given the example, and that to imitate him is equally honourable and advantageous. Do you desire to have Jesus Christ for protector, place your interests in his hands; make him the arbiter of your wrongs, he will draw good from evil. If you confide in his paternal care, he will repair all your losses. How advantageous is a generous patience, that makes the Son of God your debtor and the guardian of your honour! If other considerations fail to touch your heart, ascend Calvary, and contemplate your agonizing Saviour, who from the gibbet of the cross, cries aloud to his eternal Father for the pardon of your offences, and from the same gibbet, conjures you to pardon your brother. Hear his expiring prayer—"Father, forgive them." (*Luke*, xxiii. 34.) The offended asks pardon for the offender. Infinite charity of God! Man seeks revenge, and the Man-God implores mercy for sinful man, yet man refuses pardon to his brother. Heart more insensible than the rocks! Do you not hear the voice that issues from the wounds of your Saviour? Pardon, he says, thy brother; forgive this injury for my sake; or if thou art resolved to seek vengeance, strike those hands pierced for love of thee; force those nails more in my flesh, rend anew my wounds, deprive me even of life, but pardon your brother.

TUESDAY.

On Jesus recommending purity of intention in good works.

1st Point. Consider—"Take heed that you do not your justice before men, to be seen by them: otherwise you shall not have a reward of your Father who is in heaven." (*Matt.* vi. 1.) Purity of intention is a rare virtue even among persons who aspire to perfection. It belongs to great souls alone, because few have so eradicated self-seeking and self-will as to allow them no share in their actions. He whose heart is turned towards God by a pure intention, does nothing from caprice or impetuosity. He obeys promptly the call of duty, however contrary to his inclinations, indifferent to the judgments of men, provided the will of God be accomplished. He is not elated by success, nor dejected by adversity. He is not envious of those who succeed better; he is not less exact in the most trifling actions than those which are most important in the eyes of men. Hence proceeds his equanimity, for he is indifferent to all things except the glory of God. Though his heart be sensible to the different impressions of joy or sadness, hope or fear, aversion or sympathy, the eye of his soul changes not, but remains fixed on Jesus Christ; such is his interior disposition, that he can always say with truth: I seek but the glory of God and of Jesus Christ his only Son. Is this your disposition? How far are you removed from this degree of the virtue? Hasten to establish yourself therein, otherwise you will never attain perfection.

2nd Point. Consider—purity of intention is a virtue which forms great saints. A soul is truly great, when by a noble generosity she is raised above all created objects, and loves and admires but God alone: "I will lift thee up above the high places of the earth." (*Isaiah*, lviii. 14.) A soul is truly great, in proportion as she

increases in sanctity, and this virtue is the solid basis of all sanctity. The acquisition of all virtues depends on purity of intention, therefore the Son of God compares it to the eye. "The light of the body is the eye. If thy eye be single, thy whole body shall be lightsome." (*Matt.* vi. 22.) According to St. Gregory, the eye represents the intention of the heart, which distinguishes all the motives of virtue, regulates the movements of the soul, and which, being filled with the light of the eternal truths, reflects their heavenly brightness on all the actions of life. A soul is truly great when her designs are elevated, and when her actions are performed with a noble generosity. What more noble design than that of pleasing God? What action more glorious than that which merits an eternal recompense? The most important occupations of men, when not referred to God by a pure intention, says St. Gregory of Nyssa, are as the labour of ants moving a grain of dust. Human ambition is as the grain of sand that is mocked by the waves. The power and riches of the world are as a grain of dust driven by the wind. True greatness is that which passes beyond all time, and reaches to eternity.

3rd Point. Consider—purity of intention is necessary for all, because without it there is no merit, and without merit there is no reward. "Take heed that you do not your justice before men, to be seen by them: otherwise you shall not have a reward of your Father who is in heaven." (*Matt.* vi. 1.) As indifferent actions are sanctified by a pure intention, where this is wanting, the most holy in their nature become nugatory. Though persuaded of the excellence and necessity of this virtue, you allege the difficulty of practising it amidst a multitude of embarrassing occupations. How ingenious is the human mind in deceiving itself to its own prejudice! By an elevation of the heart, or an intense glance of the mind, you may render the most trifling action infinitely precious, yet you coldly excuse

yourself on the plea of difficulty. Is it then so difficult to offer your first thought to Jesus Christ, to open your heart to him on your first awaking, that he may fill it with the morning dew that renders souls fruitful, the unction that fortifies, and the sweet manna that nourishes them for immortality? Is it so difficult at each hour, or in commencing each action, to recall your mind to the centre of its repose, unite it to its sovereign good, and draw from the sacred heart of Jesus, the source of divine mercy, new strength to advance in his service? Endeavour to supply the defects of your actions by the ardour of your desires, saying in the sanctuary of your heart:

O Lord, that I had the strength of martyrs to immolate myself to thy glory! That I had a thousand lives to sacrifice for thee! If this seems difficult, it is self-love and inexperience that retard the flight of your mind.

WEDNESDAY.

On Jesus prescribing the manner of prayer.

1st Point. Consider—"Thus therefore shall you pray." (*Matt.* vi. 9.) He that teaches you to pray is your Creator. He who has given you life teaches you to pray. The life of the body depends on creation; the life of the soul on prayer. He that teaches you to pray is the only Son of the Eternal Father, the object of his divine complacency. The Son of God has prescribed this form of prayer. He instructs you as to what you should demand, to the end that presenting to the Father the prayer of his Son, you may be favourably heard. In fine, God himself teaches you to pray. What prayer more tender and familiar than that which has issued from the lips of Jesus Christ. Give him thanks for so signal a favour; and offer it according to the desire and

intention of his heart. There is no prayer deserves to be offered with such attention; yet perhaps there is none you perform with such distraction and indevotion. Be vigilant in correcting so serious a fault, and henceforth pronounce this sacred form of prayer with more awe and reverence, more confidence and love. Endeavour so to offer this heaven-taught prayer, that the Eternal Father may recognise his Divine Son dwelling in your heart and speaking by your lips. For if he has promised that *whatsoever you ask the Father in his name shall be granted*, how much more efficacious will be the prayer that is offered not only in his name, but in the words that he himself has dictated.

2nd Point. Consider—the matter of the prayer that Jesus Christ has taught. It contains in few words, ranged in admirable order, all that we can implore of God according either to reason or religion. The three first petitions include all you can desire for eternity; and the four last, all the means for ensuring it. Learn hence the interior spirit with which they should be recited; a sincere aversion for all that is evil, and an ardent desire of acquiring every virtue. The first petition is against pride, which seeks its own honour rather than that of God; the second against avarice, which prefers the temporal to the eternal; the third against anger, which is indignant at whatever opposes self-will; the fourth against gluttony, which is never content with necessaries; the fifth against envy, and all the vices contrary to charity; the sixth against the concupiscence of the flesh; the seventh against sloth and tepidity. Examine with what sentiments of humility, poverty, obedience, and the other virtues opposed to the capital sins, you recite this prayer. For if you are not possessed of these virtues, or at least sincerely desirous of arriving at them, your prayer is hypocrisy, your heart contradicts your lips, your desires correspond not with your words; you ask of God that which you fear to obtain

3rd Point. Consider—the form and disposition of this prayer, which is most perfect; for there is nothing wanting, nothing superfluous. Tertullian calls it the epitome of the Gospel. It is not surprising, that being so short, it is nevertheless so copious; but it is truly strange, that being so excellent, you use it with such indifference, and draw from it such little fruit. How often have you repeated it in the course of your life? Had you offered it as you should, what progress would you have made in perfection? What graces would you have obtained, what sins and temptations avoided? But by your negligence you have robbed God of his glory, frustrated the designs of Jesus Christ, and destroyed the merit of your prayers. Reflect seriously how to repair this loss. God, who already knows all your necessities, requires you to pray, to the end you may humble yourself and acknowledge your dependence; that you may more frequently remember and converse with him, and thus become disposed to receive his favours. He teaches you: "When thou shalt pray, enter into thy chamber, and having shut the door, pray to thy Father in secret" (*Matt.* vi. 6.); that is, enter into the solitude of your own heart, and close the door of your senses. Again he admonishes you: "When you are praying, speak not much." (*Matt.* vi. 7.) For in prayer the heart speaks better than the tongue, and fervent desires are more efficacious than the most sublime discourse of the understanding.

THURSDAY.

On the Preface to the Lord's Prayer.

1st Point. Consider—Jesus Christ teaches you to call God Father, rather than Creator and sovereign Lord. The name of Father is a name of love; and God attends willingly to the prayer of the heart that breathes

only charity. The name of Father excites and sustains confidence. Well may St. Bernard say in the transport of his love and joy: Where is now the voice that hitherto carried terror to the heart, I am the Lord? Now we are taught a prayer prefaced with the sweet name of Father, and inspiring a tender confidence of obtaining all the subsequent petitions. The name of Father inspires the reverence due to God. For prayer should commence with the divine praise, according to that of Isaiah: "Praise ye the Lord, and call upon his name." (*Isaiah*, xii. 4.) What more calculated to inspire a filial respect than the name of Father? If then I be a Father where is my honour? says the Lord, by the voice of his prophet. (*Malachi*, i. 6.) His name reminds you of the grace of adoption, the source of infinite good. St. Chrysostom says, that he who calls God Father, acknowledges him as the author of his justification, and of the honour of being made the brother of Jesus Christ, and heir to his heavenly kingdom. God is your Father by creation, and also by preservation, through the tender and watchful care of his providence. "Behold what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called, and should be the Sons of God." (*John*, i. 3.) Give thanks to Jesus Christ, through whom this benefit is conferred, and live in such manner as not to be unworthy of the favour.

2nd Point. Consider—Jesus Christ teaches you to call God our Father and not my Father, to recommend charity, which embraces all men in its bosom, and prays generally for all. Our prayer, says St. Cyprian, is public and common to all. God, who is our Father, desires to unite us in the bond of unity, and would have each to pray for all, as if all were included in one. In teaching you to say *our Father*, he reminds you of the equality that subsists between the children of the same Father; to the end the great may not despise the poor, since all say in common: "Our Father, who art in heaven."

In saying *our Father*, you are also admonished of the reverence due to Jesus Christ, who by his divine nature is the only Son of the eternal Father. Jesus Christ, says St. Thomas, being the Son of God in a manner appertaining to himself alone, says: "I ascend to my Father and to your Father." (*John*, xx. 17.) The royal prophet had predicted this: "And I will make him my first-born, high above the kings of the earth." (*Ps.* lxxxviii. 28.) Yet, notwithstanding his infinite pre-eminence, he disdains not to recognise you as his brother, and his Father as your Father! Thy name, says St. Bonaventure, is sweeter than the honey-comb; I call thee Father, thou who art my God! What canticle so harmonious as to say: thou art my Father? Whither shall I go further? What can I desire more than the honour of addressing thee in these words,—my Father!

3rd Point. Consider—Jesus Christ in teaching you to say "Our Father, who art in heaven," reminds you that earth is but a place of exile, and that you should sigh unceasingly after your heavenly country, awaiting the happy moment that shall call you to the possession of the inheritance of the children of God. These words, "who art in heaven," should preserve you in humility and recollection before the throne of God's majesty, warning you to admit no idle thought whilst engaged in the sacred duty of treating with the Lord of heaven and earth. Again, these words serve to detach you from the world, and inspire sentiments worthy of heaven. Seek not your satisfaction in the lowly things of earth, you whose Father is in heaven, says St. Leo. "Our Father, who art in heaven," draw our hearts from terrestrial objects, and place them on those of the heavenly kingdom, where thou showest forth thy power, wisdom, and bounty; that we may converse continually with thee, that we may ask of thee celestial goods, not those of this world; and that establishing thy kingdom in our souls, thou mayest dwell there for ever. Happy

the day, happy the hour, when I shall possess such a guest! when I may say with the spouse: "I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him, and I will not let him go." *Cant.* iii. 4.)

FRIDAY.

On the First Petition of the Lord's Prayer.

1st Point. Consider—"Hallowed be thy name." (*Matt.* vi. 9.) These words petition grace to know God, to love, to adore, and to render him a perfect homage. This is the end for which you were created: it is especially the end of your religious vocation. You have been created to love God; and you have been called to religion to love him perfectly. For, according to Father Caraffa, the religious state is nothing else than a school of charity. What progress have you hitherto made in this divine science? Be confounded that you have profited so little. You were created for no other end than to seek and procure the glory of God, in your own sanctification and the salvation of your neighbour. What a happiness could you attract all hearts to his love, and direct to him the service of all creatures. Better to be sacrificed for his glory, and exposed to all possible pains and labours in so exalted a cause, than to enjoy all the delights of heaven. For you have not been created to gratify vanity, but only to render homage to the divine greatness. What greater honour, what more sweet and amiable, than to be consumed as a perfect holocaust in the fire of his love. Ask of him neither riches, nor pleasures, nor honours; ask only to be transformed into him, and to become a man of God. If you have the spirit of his children, such should be your sentiments, says St. Bonaventure.

2nd Point. Consider—in this petition you ask, that

all creatures may unite in rendering to God due honour, love, and service. In these words: "Hallowed be thy name," you should implore the conversion of sinners; addressing yourself to him, to whom alone it belongs to change the heart, and without whose succour all human efforts are unavailing. It is a prayer worthy a religious soul, worthy an apostolic man, to beg that creatures may cease to offend their Creator, that all may fear and love his holy name. Such should be the object of your desires and supplications. You should deplore the blindness of sinners, who for a sordid interest, or vile satisfaction, insult his name whom angels adore. What an honour could you prevent such an evil, though at the expense of life itself. Pray that the name of God may be sanctified in you, as it is in himself from eternity, so that all your faculties and senses may be employed in honouring his divine attributes; and that being detached in heart and mind from all that is unprofitable, your interior eye may be turned incessantly towards the true and eternal light, contemplating him in all objects, and in all places, and receiving all events as coming from his divine and paternal hand.

3rd Point. Consider—in this petition you ask, that God would vouchsafe to render you instrumental in extending the glory of his name. This you can effect by good example. The Lord, says St. Chrysostom, would have us implore grace to glorify him by an exemplary life. For it is consummate wisdom to live so irreprehensibly, that all may be forced to praise the Lord in the sanctity of his servants. You can extend the glory of the divine name by preaching, by instruction, and spiritual conversation. "This man is to me a vessel of election, to carry my name before the gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel." (*Acts*, ix., 15.) Again, you may extend it by patience: "For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake." (*Acts*, ix. 16.) Prayer is a further means

of glorifying the name of God. This has ever been the object of the most frequent and fervent prayers of the saints. It is also the uninterrupted exercise of the angelic spirits to sing: Holy, holy, holy. You who aspire to the future society of angels, should unite here below in the heavenly canticle, which you hope to chaunt with them in a blessed eternity. As prayer, says St. Laurence Justinian, is the occupation of angels, its exercise renders a soul truly angelical. Hence the angels delight in assisting those who pray, beholding them, though clothed in a mortal body, already occupied in the same function they themselves fulfil before the throne of the Most High.

O Lord! thou hast said: "Be ye holy, because I am holy." Grant me in thy clemency that which thou commandest; purify my soul from every stain, chase away the darkness of my mind, sanctify my will, and render me worthy of thy divine presence.

SATURDAY.

On the Second Petition of the Lord's Prayer.

1st Point. Consider—"Thy kingdom come." (*Matt.* vi. 10.) These words petition the reign of divine grace; that is, that God may reign in all hearts by charity; to the end they may not be enslaved to the world, the flesh, and the devil. Divine grace is called in holy scripture the kingdom of God, and the kingdom of heaven; because it descends from heaven, it conducts thither, and by it God reigns in the soul, subjecting it to his laws, and communicating to it, through the Holy Ghost, justice, joy, and peace, in which, according to St. Paul, the kingdom of God consists. They reign with God who accomplish the precept of the apostle: "If you be risen with Christ, seek the things that are

above, not the things that are upon the earth." (*Col.* iii. 1, 2.) The Son of God is infinitely jealous of this reign, but he has many enemies, who strive to dispossess him: against these you are obliged to wage continual war, if you would preserve within you the kingdom of his grace. The apostle warns you to "fight the good fight of faith." (1 *Tim.* vi. 12.) Meditate attentively this most important admonition. Fight, for you have many enemies, both foreign and domestic—"fight the good fight." Eternal life will be the fruit of the combat, if you bear away the victory; but if you conquer not, everlasting death will be the inevitable consequence. "Fight the good fight of faith." "And this is the victory which overcometh the world, our faith." (1 *John*, v. 4.) Because, according to St. Augustin, faith obtains what the law commands, when, being animated by charity, it attracts to us that abundant light and grace which sweetens the yoke of Jesus Christ, and facilitates the practice of virtue.

2nd Point. Consider—in this petition you ask the reign of God's glory; that is, the beatific vision by which he reigns in the hearts of the saints. Although the combat of faith be praiseworthy, and the reign of the militant church advantageous for his glory, because it tends to the destruction of vice; nevertheless, according to St. Augustin, we should desire the end of this warfare; and the fire of divine love should make us aspire to that happy place, where all things are so ordered that the inferior are subject to the superior with an imperturbable stability. This fire burned in the heart of St Paul, when he said: "I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ." (*Phil.* i. 23.) How just is this desire, how weak your love, who are so little touched therewith! "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, O Lord, they shall praise thee for ever and ever." (*Ps.* cxxxiii. 5.) Happy shall you be, if casting forth the prince of this world, you establish the reign of God alone

within you. Then will he occupy all your thoughts attract all your desires, and absorb all your affections. "Thy kingdom come," who alone art infinitely amiable, infinitely desirable. Thou art the friend of the soul, thou art its guide to eternal life. Draw me after thee, that I may ascend and rest in thee, who art the centre of my happiness and my everlasting repose.

O! Redeemer of souls! "thy kingdom come."

3rd Point. Consider—in this petition you ask the reign of divine justice; that is, that God may exercise his sovereign dominion over the elect and the reprobate; and having rendered to each according to his works, he may reign for ever in unalterable peace. In this sentiment St. Paul says, in the vehemence of his zeal: "Even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption of the sons of God, the redemption of the body" (*Rom.* viii. 23.) You should also participate in this sentiment: "That denying ungodliness and worldly desires, we should live soberly, and justly, and godly in this world, looking for the blessed hope and coming of the glory of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ." (*Tit.* ii. 12, 13.) It is in your own power to choose in what manner you shall expect the coming of Jesus Christ. He defers his coming, that being come he may not be forced to condemn you His coming is terrible to the hard of heart, but sweet to the tender and devout. Examine whether your heart is hard: if so, you can now soften it into compunction. He will infallibly come: are you prepared to receive him? If this day your conscience makes you a reproach, defer not repentance until to-morrow. Say not, God is good, he is patient and easy of pardon. For your part postpone not the remedy on which your salvation depends. Finally you ask the reign of that special and tender providence with which God governs his elect; leading them with a paternal bounty to the end of their creation. This is the supplication of the Church, in which all her children

should unite, and thus fulfil the counsel of the Apostle: "Pray one for another, that you may be saved."

Omnipotent God! listen favourably to the prayer of thy children, and extend over us the power of thy arm, that we may be defended from all our enemies. Amen, Amen.

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

On the Third Petition of the Lord's Prayer.

1st Point. Consider—"Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." (*Matt.* vi. 10.) In this petition you ask light to discover the will of God. The accomplishment of his law and counsels is both the happiness of this life, and the secure way to arrive at eternal beatitude. "Blessed is the man who hath not walked in the counsel of the ungodly; but his will is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he shall meditate day and night." (*Ps.* i. 1, 2.) "Blessed are they that search his testimonies: that seek him with their whole heart." (*Ps.* cxviii. 2.) "Seek not the things that are too high for thee, and search not into things above thy ability; but the things that God hath commanded thee, think on them always, and in many of his works be not curious." (*Eccl.* iii 22.) You are here below in a region of darkness, and the path by which you walk is dangerous; therefore you stand in need of a light that can guide you securely, and this light is the law of the Lord: "Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my paths. By thy commandments I have had understanding: therefore have I hated every way of iniquity." (*Ps.* cxviii. 105, 104.) When God gave the commandments to Moses, he said, "And thou shalt bind them as a sign on thy hand, and they shall be and shall move between thy eyes." (*Deut.* vi. 8.) The wise man gives the same counsel: "Bind them in thy heart continually,

and put them about thy neck. When thou walkest let them go with thee; when thou sleepest, let them keep thee; and when thou wakest, talk with them; because the commandment is a lamp, and the law a light." (*Prov.* vi 21, 22, 23.) "Whereunto you do well to attend, as to a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts." (2 *Pet.* i. 19.)

2nd POINT. Consider—in this petition you ask grace to acquiesce with filial respect in the will of God, and to engrave in your heart his precepts, counsels, and good pleasure, submitting with perfect resignation to whatever affliction he may permit. This resignation should extend to public calamities, and the afflictions that befal your neighbour: as their sufferings should excite your sympathy, so the will of God that ordains these sufferings, demands on your part profound submission; and on all occasions you should say: "Thy will be done;" not that you pray for the evil inflicted, but that such being the will of God, you beg grace to receive it without murmuring. This acquiescence in the divine will should reach to all the events of life, and to all that regards you, without any reserve whatsoever. It should extend even to the imitation of the saints and of Jesus Christ himself. Therefore, we pray, says a learned interpreter, that the will of God be done on earth, that is, in the Church, as it is in heaven, that it is in Jesus Christ. It should be accompanied with joy, fervour, and love; for life is in the will of God: a life holy, perfect, and blessed. Is it not just that God command and you obey? Since heaven, earth, and the abyss, are subservient to his will, shall you oppose him who are but a little dust? Where can you be better than where God has placed you? What occupation can be more advantageous than that which Providence assigns you? and what can you do, or desire better, than to conform in all things to the good pleasure of God?

3rd Point. Consider—in this petition you ask grace to accomplish the will of God, as do the saints in heaven, "Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doth the will of my Father who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." (*Matt.* vii. 21.) Beware of forsaking the will of God to follow your own; for this would be to quit the straight path to heaven, to run in the way of perdition. But pray that he renew in you an upright spirit, that is, a spirit conformable to his holy will. Your will and that of God are opposed one to the other: the will of God is the rule which remains permanent, and by this rule whatever is irregular must be rectified. The will of God ordains sometimes that you endure sickness, and again, that you enjoy health. If it is agreeable to you in the one, and displeasing in the other, this proceeds from not regulating your will by the will of God, but rather desiring to bend this divine will to yours. On the contrary, crush the rising of this self-will, bending it with the submission of an upright heart to the ever adorable will of your Creator. "But as for the just, they shall give glory to thy name: and the upright shall dwell with thy countenance." (*Ps.* cxxxix. 14.)

Grant, O Lord, that thy good pleasure may be perfectly accomplished in, and by me; that I may seek neither my own inclinations nor interest, but only to do thy will in all things. Give me grace to receive indifferently both sweet and bitter, easy or difficult, provided I fulfil what is agreeable to thee.

MONDAY.

On the Fourth Petition of the Lord's Prayer.

1st Point. Consider—"Give us this day our daily bread." (*Matt.* vi. 11.) In this petition you ask for all

temporal necessaries, and those natural gifts you stand in need of for the service of God, and gaining eternal salvation. Our Lord forbids us not to ask these, when he says: "Be not solicitous therefore, saying, what shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be clothed?" (*Matt.* vi. 31.) He only prohibits solicitude for temporal things. By daily representing your necessities to God, you become more strictly united with him in thus acknowledging with profound humility your dependence on his paternal bounty. The Son of God would have you offer this prayer daily, as you require the aids of his providence daily: to the end you may render him homage as the source of all good, and be reminded by your indigence that you are in a place of exile, and should sigh continually after heaven, where alone is to be found all that is good, unmixed with evil. Cast yourself without reserve into the bosom of divine providence, where all your wants will be amply supplied. Ask not superfluities, but only what is of necessity, and ask this both for yourself and all creatures. "All expect of thee that thou give them food in season."(*Ps.* ciii. 17).

2nd Point. Consider—in this petition you ask the supernatural aids necessary for spiritual life and advancement in virtue. As the soul draws its origin from heaven, it requires a celestial nourishment. This nourishment is the grace of God, which should prevent, accompany, and follow all spiritual actions. This nourishment is also the word of God. "Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God." (*Matt.* iv. 4.) Nevertheless, there are those who relish not this divine bread. "The bread of lying is sweet to man," (*Prov.* xx. 17,) while the bread of God's word seem insipid and disgusting. St. Augustin says: As the body without food becomes dry and attenuated, the soul that neglects the word of God becomes weak, useless, and incapable of any meri-

torious action. Again, the nourishment of the soul is virtue. She lives by faith and charity. "If I have not charity," says St. Paul, "I am nothing." (1 *Cor.* xiii.) She lives by abstinence. Fasting has always been the food of virtue. From abstinence proceed holy thoughts, pure desires, salutary counsels; and experience teaches that voluntary mortification of the senses subdues concupiscence, and imparts new strength to virtue. She lives by prayer, and the fervent accomplishment of the divine will in the discharge of all her duties. "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me." (*John*, iv. 34.)

3rd Point Consider—in this petition you ask the Eucharistic bread, the supersubstantial nourishment of the soul, the bread of eternal life. "This is the bread which cometh down from heaven: that if any man eat of it he may not die." (*John*, vi. 50.) It is your daily bread, which you should daily supplicate, and of which you should daily eat, if not sacramentally, (a privilege peculiar to the ministers of the altar, and those of a perfect life,) at least spiritually, as all the faithful ought to do by holy and fervent desires of participating in the fruit of this adorable sacrament. If, says St. Ambrose, it is your daily bread, why partake of it so seldom? Rather live in such manner as to be permitted daily to receive *the bread of the strong*, by which you will daily advance towards the term of perfection. Is it thus you live? Are you as solicitous for the nourishment of the soul as for that of the body? Do you experience the spiritual hunger and holy avidity with which pure souls approach the divine mysteries? How insensible the soul that, possessing a nourishment so exquisite, solid, and delicious, seeks satisfaction in what is worthless, empty, and insipid! If the words that proceed from the lips of the Son of God are capable of sustaining the soul, what strength must be communicated in the manducation of his body and blood! If the odour of this celestial manna suffice to exhilarate the whole world,

what joy should be felt in tasting its sweetness! Is it not unworthy of a soul for whom this heavenly banquet is prepared, to be occupied with base trifles, unmindful of the invitation and sacramental presence of her divine spouse.

Most sweet Jesus! may my soul desire and sigh after thee, "as the hart panteth after the fountains of waters." (*Ps.* xli. 2.) And as thy infinite charity draws thee down upon the altar to be my "daily bread," may a reciprocal love so attach my heart to thee, that our union may be indissoluble both in time and eternity.

TUESDAY.

On the Fifth Petition of the Lord's Prayer.

1st Point. Consider—"Forgive us our trespasses." (*Matt.* vi. 12) After imploring the benefits spiritual and temporal of which you stand in need, you petition to be delivered from the evils to which you are exposed. The first and chief is sin, whether considered in its own nature or in its consequences. That same God whom you have so often contemned or outraged, is the first to seek after, and call you back to his parental bosom, teaching you in this divine prayer how to ask forgiveness for your offences. Encouraged by his compassionate clemency, cast yourself with confidence at his sacred feet, conjure him by his bowels of mercy to pardon your sins, to forget your ingratitude, since he has vouchsafed to offer himself a victim for your reconciliation. He that commands you to ask, will not refuse forgiveness, but requires that you implore it with contrition and humility of heart, uniting your penitential efforts with the atoning sacrifice offered for you on the cross. Do you understand how immense

the debt you have contracted? Are you sensible of the burden with which you are charged? Do you give it the serious reflection a subject so important demands? What have you hitherto done, what will you do henceforth for discharging the debt due to divine justice? Will you not at least suffer patiently the visitation of sickness, submit to such a loss, bear silently such an injury, overlook an importunity, resist natural repugnance in the performance of certain duties? Such acts would be an exercise of penance pleasing to God, and on your part at once satisfactory and meritorious.

2nd Point. Consider—all are obliged to implore forgiveness, because all are sinners, and consequently debtors to divine justice. Who ever equalled the apostles in sanctity? nevertheless, remarks St. Augustin, our Lord commands them to say: "forgive us our trespasses." Where shall you find a man whose life is so irreproachable as not to require the offering of this prayer? Jesus Christ has taught it to the pastors of his flock, and is it unnecessary for the sheep? Even holy persons, though free from great offences, are, notwithstanding, subject to many venial faults. Wherefore they offer the tremendous mysteries with profound contrition for their "innumerable sins, offences, and negligences." In these terms the priest presents the oblation at the altar. With what sentiments should you, frail as you are, appear in the presence of infinite sanctity? With what humility and compunction should you have recourse to this prayer, that you may be sheltered against the wrath of God? especially as the justice of this life, according to St. Augustin, consists more in the remission of sin than in the exercise of virtue." "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered" (*Ps.* xxxi. 1) with the veil of penance and prayer.

3rd Point. Consider—"Forgive us our trespasses

as we forgive them that trespass against us." You can never obtain forgiveness unless you also sincerely forgive those by whom you have been offended. God enters into a treaty by which he obliges himself to pardon your offences, on condition that you pardon your offending brother. You hold, therefore, in your own hands the measure of that mercy you desire to obtain. There is nothing more desirable, even nothing more honourable, for a Christian, according to St. Gregory of Nyssa, than to forgive injuries; since it renders him, so to speak, like unto God, to whom essentially belongs this prerogative of clemency. "Who can forgive sins, but only God?" said the pharisees, and they were not deceived. (*Mark*, ii. 7.) In dispensing pardon and granting mercy to sinners, he shows forth his omnipotence in its most resplendent light. Man, therefore, cannot display a more glorious magnanimity than that of pardoning his fellow man. He is truly great that commands his passions, and imitating the infinite goodness of God, employs the power of his free will, not in inflicting vengeance, but in dispensing mercy. Happy offence, the pardon whereof you can allege before your sovereign judge as a secure plea for the remission of your sins. Be not grieved, my brethren, says St. Bonaventure, if men insult, wrong, or persecute you, rather let the evils you suffer be a subject of joy, even of desire, because in pardoning injuries you cancel your own debt, for he perfectly satisfies his creditor that gives him all that he demands.

WEDNESDAY.

On the Sixth Petition of the Lord's Prayer.

1st Point. Consider—"And lead us not into temptation." (*Matt.* vi. 12.) As temptation is not essen-

tially evil, you do not ask to be absolutely delivered from its attacks, but only to be preserved from yielding thereto. No one, not even the most holy, is secure from temptation, wherefore guard vigilantly against this dangerous enemy, but neither by flying the combat, yielding to excessive fear, nor asking to be exempted from temptation. The Lord is *the God of armies.* You must exhibit a courage worthy of the soldier of such a chief. St. Augustin remarks, that no one can prove his strength unless he is tempted. As consolations elevate a soul, temptations humble her; the one withdraws from despondence, the other preserves from pride and presumption. Consolation manifests the gratuitous charity of God; temptation discovers to the soul her own weakness, and admonishes her of her defects. By this salutary vicissitude she avoids dangerous extremes, and preserves that happy medium which is the security of virtue? "The Lord is my light and my salvation: whom shall I fear? The Lord is the protector of my life: of whom shall I be afraid?" (*Ps.* xxvi. 1.) Such is the confidence you should have in God. Prove me, O Lord, and try me: burn my reins and my heart. Such is the diffidence you should have in yourself. Hence follows: "For thy mercy is before my eyes, and I am well pleased with thy truth. I have not sat with the counsel of vanity, neither will I go in with doers of unjust things." (*Ps* xxv. 2, 3, 4.)

2nd Point. Consider—in this petition you implore of God to protect you from temptations that would prove prejudicial, and enable you to vanquish those with which he permits you to be attacked. For his succour is always necessary, that you may not be overcome either by surprise or violence. We are weak and frail, says St. Augustin, our enemies attack us within and without, and from lesser temptations we fall into great. The most dangerous temptations are those to which you give occasion by indulgence of the senses,

by negligence in guarding against, or not promptly repelling them, and those of which you are not sufficiently afraid. Did you know the danger to which you are exposed, how fervently would you pray: "Lead us not into temptation." You have to contend with an enemy, strong, vigilant, and experienced, who combats with invisible arms, and often disguises his pernicious designs under a deceitful appearance of good. Your senses, passions, and perverse inclinations, your vices, and evil habits, hold correspondence with this enemy. How difficult to defend yourself against the many assaults of anger, envy, and innumerable other passions, that sometimes rise altogether in the soul, since of yourself you are unable to resist them even singly. Yet you sleep fearlessly, though surrounded by enemies that breathe only your destruction. Fear, watch, pray, and invoke unceasingly the divine protection.

3rd Point. Consider—the designs of God in permitting his elect to be tempted. He permits it for his own glory, for nothing more wonderfully demonstrates the power of God than to see man, who is more weak and feeble than the reed, triumphing over the powers of hell by the succour of divine grace. He permits it to prove his elect, and render them worthy of his love. "And because thou wast acceptable to God, it was necessary that temptation should prove thee." (*Job*, xii. 13.) He permits it also to exercise them in self-knowledge, that they may sound their own hearts, into which, perhaps, they have not sufficiently entered. Again, he permits it to purify the just, to expiate their offences, and secure them against future prevarication. Temptation, says St. Ambrose, is as salt preserving the soul from corruption; according to St. Augustin, it is the antidote that was given to St. Paul, lest he should be dazzled by the splendour of his revelations. "And lest the greatness of the revelations should exalt me,

there was given me a sting of my flesh, an angel of Satan to buffet me." (2 *Cor.* xii. 7.) In fine, he permits it that they may increase in sanctity, and become more deeply rooted in humility and all other virtues. "My brethren," says the apostle, "count it all joy when you shall fall into divers temptations: knowing that trying of your faith worketh patience. And patience hath a perfect work: that you may be perfect and entire, failing in nothing." (*James*, i, 2, 3, 4.) Temptation purchases the crown of immortality. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he hath been proved, he shall receive the crown of life." (*James*, i. 12.)

O God of clemency! what will the remission of my sins avail, unless thou aidest me also to overcome temptation? For I am prone to evil, and without thy preventing grace I cannot resist my perverse inclinations. Support me then, O divine mercy! and since thou drawest me out of the abyss, suffer me not to fall again into the snares of my enemies.

THURSDAY.

On the Concluding Petition of the Lord's Prayer.

1st Point. Consider—"But deliver us from evil, amen." (*Matt.* vi. 13.) In the foregoing petition you implored preservation from the guilt of sin; in this you supplicate to be delivered from the penalty sin has entailed. The evils of the future life are, with regard to the reprobate, privation of eternal glory, and the torments of hell, whereof the number, rigour, and duration are inconceivable; and with regard to the souls in purgatory, the suspension for a time of beatitude, and the temporal pains due to venial, or to mortal sin not sufficiently expiated. The evils of the present life are,

with regard to the soul, darkness of the understanding, propensity to evil, relapses, obduracy, and final impenitence; with regard to the body, all the miseries that afflict human life, and from which none is exempt, because all are sinners. St. Paul has justly said, "Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that worketh evil. But glory, and honor, and peace to every one that worketh good." (*Rom.* ii. 9, 10.) How wretched a servitude to be the slave of sin, says St. Ambrose. His yoke is a yoke of iron, and his chains are chains of brass! Would to God that sinners now deliberately considered the weight of this burden; they would not so rashly charge themselves with it for eternity. Their misfortune is, that during this life they feel it not; but when summoned out of this world, they shall understand and be terror-stricken at the temerity which has plunged them into torments at once excessive and interminable.

2nd Point. Consider—to avert all those evils you must carefully guard against sin, because no other evil can harm, if you suffer not iniquity to dwell in your heart. You must prevent the pains of purgatory and hell by the holy austerities of penance, regularity of life, mortification of the senses, works of piety and charity, finally by contrition and prayer. You must avert the spiritual chastisements with which God is wont to visit sin in this life, by a serious application to the duties of piety, the good use of grace, fervor of spirit, custody of the senses, and flight of occasions that lead to relaxation. You must support with resignation those temporal sufferings which self-love regards as evils, which oftentimes disquiet even pious souls and shake their constancy; but which in reality are not evils, but rather great benefits when received and endured in a spirit of faith. Hence our Lord permits that you ask to be delivered from temporal afflictions, as from what may become pernicious through your tepidity or pusillanimity, and

teaches you to implore grace to undergo patiently the trials he is pleased to appoint. When you pray to be *delivered from evil*, you may be answered as was St. Paul: "My grace is sufficient for thee, for power is made perfect in infirmity." (2 *Cor.* xii. 9.) Wherefore examine your own heart, whether it is in this disposition you implore of God to *deliver you from evil;* that is, whether you ask grace to accept cheerfully the temporal afflictions you have to undergo. For he cannot more advantageously deliver you from such evils, than by conferring on you an entire conformity to his holy will in the maladies, afflictions, humiliations, and reverses incident to the condition of our mortality.

3rd Point. Consider—prayer is your secure refuge against all the evils you either suffer or apprehend. For the mercy of God compassionates all, but he has engaged himself by reiterated promises to hear those who invoke him in their afflictions. Present yourself, therefore, confidently before your heavenly Father, relying on the merits of his divine Son. Cast yourself into the bosom of his providence, for he wills you to have recourse to him with filial love. Offer, through Jesus Christ, this prayer which himself has taught you. Let it be accompanied with sentiments of profound humility, entire abandonment to the providence of God, and submission to his adorable will, universal charity, desiring, from pure zeal for the glory of God, and salvation for your neighbour, that he vouchsafe to deliver them from all evils spiritual and corporal, eternal and temporal To conclude, offer it with unlimited confidence in the charity and merits of Jesus Christ. He terminates the petitions comprised in this prayer with the word—Amen, which he, as a divine seal, promises —Verily I will grant all that you demand. On your part this word signifies faith in his promises, and desire of obtaining their effect. My brethren, says St. Augustin, your Amen is your conclusion, your avowal,

your stipulation. Hope for all you ask, and all that the Lord has promised, and believe firmly that your petition will be granted.—Amen, Amen.

Life and death, poverty and riches, are equally thy gift, O Lord! How can that be evil which proceeds from the sovereign good? Nevertheless, they may become prejudicial through our impatience, our little courage and confidence. Fortify us, therefore, O Father of mercies, and grant by thy grace that all may contribute to our good. Purify us here as gold in the furnace, and make us vessels of honour and glory in the life that is eternal. Amen, Amen.

FRIDAY.

On Jesus healing the Leper.

1st Point. Consider—"And when he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him: and behold a leper came and adored him." (*Matt.* viii. 1, 2.) In the malady of this leper behold the melancholy condition of a sinner, and the horror you should entertain for sin. Heretofore God commended his people: "observe diligently that thou incur not the stroke of the leprosy." (*Deut.* xxiv. 8.) Now he says to Christians: *observe diligently that thou incur not the guilt of sin.* Leprosy is a disease horrible to the senses; but sin is an evil incomparably more loathsome and hideous in the eyes of God. Leprosy is a contagious malady; therefore, in the old law, those who were afflicted with it were debarred human society. The contagion of sin is infinitely more to be dreaded, for it separates the soul here from the feast of the lamb, and hereafter from the kingdom of heaven for eternity, leaving to the sinner no other portion than the fire of hell and the company of demons. The

leprosy is incurable, or very difficult of healing: for sin there is no remedy, save one. The waters of the deluge could not drown, neither can the flames of hell consume or efface the guilt of sin. The blood of the immaculate Lamb is alone its remedy. "Surely he hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows, and we have thought him as it were a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted. But he was wounded for our iniquities, he was bruised for our sins; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his bruises we are healed." (*Is.* liii. 4, 5.)

2nd Point. Consider—"And behold a leper came and adored him, saying: Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." (*Matt.* viii. 2.) In the prayer of this leper you discover the dispositions with which you should approach Jesus Christ. His prayer is accompanied with a lively faith, and a profound sentiment of his own unworthiness. Animated with confidence and love, he submits himself and his desire of being healed to the will of his heavenly physician. Thus should you comport yourself, conforming in all your necessities to the will of God. Nevertheless, in your spiritual infirmities you are assured that God wills your deliverance, and if he affects it not, it is because you place some impediment, or desire it not with sufficient ardour. But in corporal infirmities you should ask relief with holy indifference and absolute submission of your will, which is ordinarily too anxious under these afflictions, to whatever it shall please him to ordain. "And when he shall have fulfilled his will in me, many other like things are also at hand with him." (*Job*, xxiii. 14.) Wherefore, though he treat you rigorously, forbear to scrutinize the secrets of his providence; suffice to know that he has willed it, and in this sentiment adore him with profound respect. You call God your Father, says St. Chrysostom; render him the honour due in accomplishing his will if you would receive his inheritance.

If you would merit that which he has promised, regulate your life according to his good pleasure.

3rd Point. Consider—"And Jesus stretching forth his hand, touched him, saying: I will, be thou made clean. And forthwith his leprosy was cleansed." (*Matt.* viii. 3.) In the miraculous cure of this leper, you behold the sovereign power and goodness of the Divine Physician. Jesus exhibits no disgust at the approach of the leper; he vouchsafes to touch him with his sacred hand. The only leprosy you should hold in execration is that of the soul, which is no other than sin. Fear not then to approach Jesus Christ. In asmuch as his sanctity causes him to recoil from sin, charity renders him accessible to the sinner. It is the part of the sinner to seek his Saviour, and that of the Saviour to be propitious to the sinner. Admire the omnipotence of Jesus Christ!—a single act of his will, a word, a moment, suffices to heal this poor leper. He has no sooner said, "I will, be thou made clean," than the poor sufferer obtains the health which he sought with such an edifying submission to the divine will. Thus, oftentimes, God grants all things to a soul which, in a spirit of dependence and holy abandonment to his will, neither desires nor asks but that he dispose of her as he pleases. "And forthwith his leprosy was cleansed." How often has the Son of God said also to you, "I will" that you be more humble, meek, patient, devout, and recollected, and you have not obeyed?

Grant, O Lord, that all my desires may be immolated as so many victims sacrificed to thy honour, and that I may yield to thee the liberty of my will as an homage to thy sovereign dominion.

SATURDAY.

On Jesus healing the Centurion's Servant.

1st Point. Consider—"And when he had entered into Capharnaum, there came to him a Centurion, beseeching him, and saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, and is grievously tormented." (*Matt.* viii. 5, 6.) Faith is an emanation of the light of glory, which operates proportionably in the mind of a Christian what it effects in the blessed; with this difference, that faith is a light of direction that guides in the path to heaven, whilst the light of glory discovers the object of beatitude, which is the term of the journey. The latter is more resplendent, the former more obscure, but not less certain, nor less comprehensive. For the saints behold no more than we believe: that which God manifests to them by his essence, he reveals to us by his word. Hence the excellence and necessity of faith, without which, as it is impossible to please God, it is also impossible to approach him, and consequently to arrive at the sovereign good. Faith being so necessary, how deplorable that it should be so weak in the generality of Christians. With what care should you cultivate this virtue, since your salvation and spiritual advancement depend on the vigour with which it acts in your soul? Habitual faith suffices not: its acts must be frequently reiterated. If you would secure your salvation, let your faith be lively, firm, active, constant, and immutable.

2nd Point. Consider—"Amen I say to you, I have not found so great faith in Israel." (*Matt.* viii. 10.) It is faith leads the centurion to Jesus Christ; faith inspires his prayer: "There came to him a Centurion, beseeching him." (*Matt.* viii. 5.) By faith he exercises charity towards his servant, and obtains his cure: "Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, and is grievously tormented" (*Matt.* viii. 6.) By faith he

humbles himself before the Son of God, and acknowledges he is unworthy of his presence. "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof: but only say the word, and my servant shall be healed." (*Matt.* viii. 8.) By faith he recognises the sovereign power of Jesus Christ, and renders thereto a glorious testimony: "But only say the word, and my servant shall be healed." By faith he calls forth the admiration of the Son of God, and obtains from him all that he demands: "And Jesus hearing this, marvelled; and said to them that followed him: Amen I say to you, I have not found so great faith in Israel." (*Matt* viii. 10.) Finally, it is by faith that after his example "many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom (*for want of faith*) shall be cast into the exterior darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (*Matt.* viii. 11, 12.)

3rd POINT. Consider—faith renders us happy amidst the sufferings of this life. It is the property of faith to anticipate futurity, and render it present; for according to St. Thomas, the eternal happiness we hope for is contained in faith, as the fruit of the tree is enclosed in the kernel. Faith, not content with bestowing the treasure of bliss in expectation, imparts in effect all the treasures of grace. Is he not doubly happy, and can he be afflicted under the transient evils of life, that has God in his heart, and has moreover a secure pledge of a heavenly crown? Faith hiding in the depth of the heart the grace of Jesus Christ as an infinite treasure, environs us with his power as a rampart that defends us from our enemies, and repels the shafts of sorrow that would trouble the peace of the soul. Faith triumphs over our enemies, and imparts peace to the soul, as the fruit of its labours. Faith triumphs over the vanities of the world; over the sufferings and miseries

of this life. It triumphs over the temptations of the devil, who fears nothing so much as a lively and generous faith. This virtue triumphs over all the enemies of our repose, and enables us to look on good or evil occurrences with an equanimity so sweet and tranquil, that it may be called a terrestrial paradise. If you are not sensible of these effects in the hour of trial, it is an evident mark of the weakness of your faith. How different your sentiments from those of the saints! You lament the loss of that prosperity they feared to enjoy; you are inconsolable under sufferings, which were the object of their desires. "Save me, O Lord, for there is now no saint; truths are decayed from among the children of men." (*Ps.* xi. 2.)

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

On Jesus raising the Widow's Son of Naim.

1st Point. Consider—"And when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold a dead man was carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow, and a great multitude of the city was with her." (*Luke*, vii. 12.) This only son, become the prey of death in the flower of his age, admonishes you that the hour of your departure from this life is uncertain; consequently, that you should always hold yourself prepared. There are two most important affairs that should engross all your attention; that is to say, the care of your life, and that of your death. Let your life be well regulated, and God will not fail to watch over your last moments. Live as if each day was your last; refer every action to that end; perform them with that perfection you would desire at the hour of death; make your life a continual death; die to sin, and all inordinate attachment to creatures and to your-

self; then will God change your death into a life of eternal glory. A happy death is a gift of the pure mercy of God. You should hope it from his goodness, but beware of abusing this confidence. Presumption and despondence are equally to be feared; either is a dangerous snare. Work your salvation between hope and fear. Hope in the mercy of God who wills your salvation; fear at the same time his justice, and defer not your conversion since you are not secure of a single moment.

2nd Point. Consider—"Whom when the Lord had seen, being moved with mercy towards her, he said to her, weep not." (*Luke*, vii. 13.) The spiritual miseries of the soul are the only object deserving your tears. If you consider death with regard to the law of nature, it is a tribute due to the sovereign dominion of the Creator, of whom you hold life as a deposit you must restore when demanded. If you consider it relatively to the law of sin, it is a debt due to the justice of God, who, being Sovereign Judge, has condemned the body to perish. If you consider it with reference to the law of grace, it is no longer a penalty, but a most precious and inestimable gift, says St. Bonaventure. According to St. Bernard, in death you find three priceless favours: a repose that terminates all your care and labours, the pleasure of a new life, and a certain security never to lose the enjoyment thereof, because it is founded on the divine eternity, which is immutable. In whatever view you consider it, you should accept it from the hand of God, with an entire abandonment to all his designs over you, without complaint or opposition of your will to his. For if death is a sacrifice and homage you owe to his sovereign dominion and infinite excellence, it is just that you should hold yourself continually in his presence as a victim consecrated to his glory, which only awaits its entire consummation. If it is a penalty due to divine justice, it is reasonable that you offer it

up in satisfaction for your debts; if it is a gift, you ought to receive it with thanksgiving, saying with the well-beloved of the father: "Yea, Father, for so hath it seemed good in thy sight." (*Matt.* xi. 26.)

3rd POINT. Consider—the circumstance of the miracle represents that which occurs in the conversion of a sinner. "And he came near." The sinner is removed to an infinite distance from God, yet God is the first to approach the sinner. The just comes to sanctify the unjust. The All-sufficient seeks nothingness even in the depth of its abyss. "And touched the bier." The body is as a bier to the soul which is dead to grace. The Saviour *touches* the body with the hand of his justice, afflicting it, to the end that the soul awaking from the sleep of death, may profit by the offered grace, implore mercy, and recover the supernatural life that sin had destroyed. "And they that carried it stood still." Unsubdued passions bear along the soul, "to a land that is dark and covered with the mist of death: a land of misery and darkness, where the shadow of death, and no order, but everlasting horror dwelleth," (*Job*, x. 21, 22), unless Jesus Christ arrest the impetuosity of their sallies, and the soul correspond faithfully with his preventing grace. "And he said: young man, I say to thee, arise." To the Incarnate Word it belongs to make his voice be heard by the dead. He has no sooner uttered the word, than "he that was dead, sat up, and began to speak." Learn obedience from that which even the dead yield to the voice of God. "And he gave him to his mother." (*Luke*, vii. 14, 15.) Fear not to sacrifice what you hold most dear for the love of Jesus Christ: he will restore it an hundred fold. Beseech him to restore you to the care of his paternal providence; to the protection of the Blessed Virgin; to the guidance of his holy church; to the bosom of religion, that you may live and die therein, and lead others by your example to glorify him who has filled you with his favours.

MONDAY.

On St John sending his Disciples to Jesus Christ.

1st Point. Consider—"Now when John had heard in prison the works of Christ, sending two of his disciples, he said to him: Art thou he that art to come, or look we for another?" (*Matt.* xi. 2, 3.) St. John doubts not that Jesus Christ is the Messiah; he had already pointed him out to the people as the "Lamb that taketh away the sins of the world." According to St. Chrysostom, he proposes this question, that his disciples may have a more clear conviction of the divinity of Jesus Christ, by sending them to himself to be enlightened. Learn hence what should be your zeal to lead others to Jesus Christ by your prayers, counsels, and example. Happy the father who educates his children, the master who instructs his disciples, the superior who governs his subjects purely with this view, regarding neither inclination nor interest, but only the salvation of those committed to their care and the glory of God, the true Father, the sovereign Lord and Master. It is the characteristic of the just, says Saint Gregory, however overwhelmed with individual sorrow and affliction, never to relax in their duty towards their neighbour. Examine your dispositions, and if you discover not this true spirit of zeal in your heart, implore it earnestly of our Lord, and desist not from the pursuit until you have obtained your petition.

2nd Point Consider—"And Jesus making answer, said to them: Go and relate to John what you have heard and seen. The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he that shall not be scandalized in me." (*Matt.* xi. 4, 5, 6.) Examine the virtues discoverable in this reply. It is humble, he speaks not of himself; prudent, for he

uses an admirable modesty and reserve, giving no cause to the Jews to accuse him of ambition; it is solid, he proves his divine mission by the marks that Isaiah had predicted. The tree is known by its fruit, and the just man by his works. "So faith also, if it have not works, is dead in itself." (*James*, ii. 17.) Do you believe in Jesus Christ? Prove it by your works, and by the sanctity of your life. Do you make profession of teaching others? "Be thou an example of the faithful, in word, in conversation, in charity, in faith, in chastity," (*1 Tim.* iv. 12,) and in all virtues; but especially in humility and contempt of the world. "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews indeed a stumbling block, and unto the Gentiles, foolishness: but unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." (*1 Cor.* i. 23, 24.) Do you blush to bear the livery of your crucified Master, to discourse of him, to imitate his modesty and humility in your intercourse with your neighbour. Beware of worldly shame or human respect, for to such are these awful words addressed—"For he that shall be ashamed of me and my words, of him the Son of Man shall be ashamed, when he shall come in his majesty." (*Luke*, ix. 26.)

3rd Point. Consider—"And when the messengers of John were departed, he began to speak to the multitudes concerning John. What went you out into the desert to see?—a reed shaken with the wind? But what went you out to see?—a man clothed in soft garments? Behold they that are in costly apparel and live delicately, are in the houses of kings. But what went you out to see?—a prophet? Yea, I say to you, and more than a prophet: this is he of whom it is written: *Behold I send my angel before thy face, who shall prepare thy way before thee.* For I say to you: amongst those that are born of women, there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist." (*Luke*, vii. 24, *seq.*) The praises of men are vain, for they behold but the exterior. True virtue is

that which God approves, because his eye penetrates the heart and cannot be deceived. Self-praise is still more vain and contemptible. "For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but he whom God commendeth." (1 *Cor.* x. 18.) Consequently it is he alone you should endeavour to please. If you would render yourself praiseworthy in his sight, examine the subject of his eulogium on St. John. He praises him neither for science, nor eloquence, nor riches, nor pomp, but for mortification and constancy in virtue. Reflect also on these words of the Saviour: "From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away." (*Matt.* xi. 16, 17.) Incur not the same reproach as the Jews: "But whereunto shall I esteem this generation to be like? It is like to children sitting in the market-place, who crying to their companions say: We have piped to you, and you have not danced; we have lamented, and you have not mourned." (*Ibid.*) Beware, lest your neglect in corresponding with divine grace, render you inexcusable, and oblige God to remove from you with the reproach, that were it not for your own fault, the Son of God, the Incarnate Wisdom, would have conducted you to the perfection of sanctity.

TUESDAY.

On the Conversion of St. Magdalen.

1st Point. Consider—"Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much." (*Luke*, vii. 47.) How powerful is divine love in triumphing over a rebellious heart; Magdalen has no sooner felt its influence than she says with the spouse in the Canticles: "I will rise, and will go about the city: in the streets and the broad-ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth."

(*Cant.* iii. 2.) Magdalen is no longer the votary of pride and pleasure; the idol of vanity is prostrate at the sacred feet of her Saviour, the true ark of the testament. She contemns alike the praise and censures of the world, and her only pleasure is now found in penitence and tears. Heretofore she sought to attract the homage of creatures; now she bends in the most profound adoration before her sovereign Creator and Lord. All that hitherto she had employed as incentives to sin, and as snares to allure unwary hearts, is now devoted as a sacrifice of atoning love on the altar of the sacred feet of Jesus. "And behold a woman that was in the city, a sinner, when she knew that he sat at meat in the pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment; and standing behind at his feet, she began to wash his feet with tears, and wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment." (*Luke*, vii. 37, 38.)

2nd Point. Consider—"And standing behind at his feet, she began to wash his feet with tears." Magdalen needs not words to plead her pardon. There is no eloquence more persuasive than that of tears; they are the language of the heart, the mute supplication that holy souls have never offered in vain before the throne of God. An interior glance, a sigh, a tear, is worth a thousand words. The voice of Magdalen's heart and eyes is a burning shaft of penitential love, which penetrates the heart of Jesus. She dares not call him her God, because she had offered a profane incense to the idols of passion; she shrinks from the sanctity of his countenance, because it represented to her the deformity of her sins. But her tears, as a sacrifice of impetration, are offered at the propitious moment of grace and mercy. Spare no efforts to gain and augment in your heart the spirit of holy compunction; it is all efficacious in the great work of perfection It is a remedy against every vice, and a powerful aid

in the acquisition of every virtue; the secure path to mercy, and true eternal peace. "And he said to the woman: Thy faith hath made thee safe, go in peace." (*Luke*, vii. 50.)

3rd POINT. Consider—this admirable penitent, from the happy moment of her conversion, making the sacred feet of her Redeemer her place of safety and retreat from the world. Thus the holy scripture always represents this perfect model of penitent souls. Does Jesus pour forth the words of heavenly wisdom? Magdalen reposing at his sacred feet imbibes their influence. Does he raise Lazarus from the grave? This favour is granted to the prayers and tears of prostrate Magdalen. When nailed to the gibbet of Calvary, Magdalen faithful even unto death, remains at the foot of the cross. Finally, Magdalen is the first to worship, prostrate at his feet, her resuscitated Lord and Master. Reflect on the penitent life of this fervent lover, that it may cover you with salutary confusion. Contemplate her tears, the ardour of her uninterrupted prayer, the excessive rigour of her austerities; these will accuse at the awful day of retribution your insensibility of heart, dissipation of spirit, and indulgence of sensuality. Resolve, therefore, no longer to resist the grace that solicits your conversion. Give yourself from this moment unreservedly to God. If you fear your own weakness, make his paternal goodness your support. Go to the sacred feet of Jesus. Lament in anguish of heart the sins and ingratitude of your life; he will change your tears into a source of heavenly comfort. Offer him your heart; he will transform it into a holocaust of pure love. Consecrate to him your soul; he will engrave on all its faculties his living image, that shall never be effaced. What can you fear in the path of penance, having such a model for your imitation, such a Saviour for your aid.

WEDNESDAY.

On Jesus expelling the Dumb Devil.

1st Point. Consider—"And he was casting out a devil, and the same was dumb; and when he had cast out the devil, the dumb spoke: and the multitudes were in admiration at it." (*Luke*, xi. 14.) The Incarnate Wisdom descended from the throne of his majesty to overthrow the empire of the demon and destroy his works. Wherefore he employs himself during his divine mission, in expelling the infernal spirits from their usurped tyrannical dominion over the souls and bodies of men. "And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread." (*Mark*, iii. 20.) Contemplate in the Saviour of souls an example of perfect zeal. The devoted ardour with which he labours to gain souls seems to increase in proportion with the fatigue he undergoes, and the desire of the pious multitude to hear his heavenly doctrine. Such earnestness do they manifest in attending to the affair of salvation, that they leave not the Saviour or his disciples either leisure or repose. How desirable that the faithful of the present day exhibited a similar fervour for the science of salvation! Beseech the ever merciful dispenser of all grace to inspire them with the disposition of this devout multitude. Examine what is your zeal in studying and reducing to practice the heavenly doctrine and example of your Master.

2nd Point. Consider—"And when he had cast out the devil, the dumb spoke: and the multitudes were in admiration at it: But some of them said: He casteth out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of devils." (*Luke*, xi. 14, 15.) Reflect on the comportment of your divine model amidst the acclamations of the people, who extol his power over the evil spirits, and the blasphemies of the scribes, who attribute the miracle he operates to

the prince of darkness. He receives the expression of these contrary sentiments with a marvellous equanimity of spirit; instructing you by his example to cultivate such purity of intention as will raise you alike above the approbation and the censure of creatures. To both you should be indifferent, but the blandishments of the world are to be feared and avoided more than its insults and contempt. Imagine Jesus Christ addressing you in these words: "Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart." (*Matt.* xi. 29.) Imitate his humility when you are commended, and his meekness when you are calumniated; saying with David: "And I became as a man that heareth not: and that hath no reproofs in his mouth." (*Ps.* xxxvii. 15.)

3rd Point. Consider—the wisdom with which Jesus Christ replies to his accusers, and the important maxims he advances in refuting their calumny. "Every kingdom divided against itself, shall be brought to desolation." (*Matt.* xii. 25.) Division is the general cause of the ruin of kingdoms, families, and communities. As it changed the brightest angel into the prince of darkness, it is sufficient to change your heart, which should be the sanctuary of the divinity, into the haunt of demons. "He that is not with me, is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth." (*Matt.* xii. 30.) The characteristic of Jesus Christ is to unite by the bond of peace and charity: that of the demon, to divide and foment dissension. "And the wolf catcheth, and scattereth the sheep," (*John*, xi 52,) by casting discord amongst sinners, whom he holds in captivity. On the contrary, Jesus Christ died "to gather together in one the children of God, that were dispersed." (*Ibid*). "And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but he that shall speak against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in the world to come." (*Matt* xii. 32.) The sins against the Holy

Ghost are despair, presumption, impenitence, opposition to the known truth, envy at the spiritual good of others; such was the sin of the pharisee, who in recognising the divinity of Jesus Christ in the miracles he operated, maliciously attributed them to the power of the devil. Whoever sins through malice against the lights of the Holy Ghost, and the remorse of his conscience, evidently exposes himself to reprobation by incurring the guilt of a sin, in its own nature irremissible and eternal

THURSDAY.

On Jesus despoiling the strong armed, in expelling the Devil.

1st Point. Consider—"When a strong man armed keepeth his court: those things are in peace which he possesseth. (*Luke*, xi. 21.) The devil, who is the strong armed, uses many stratagems to keep possession of sinners. First, he blinds them by obscuring their faith in the eternal truths. Again, he renders them dumb, preventing the profession of their faith, the acknowledgment of their sins, or declaring themselves openly for virtue and the service of God. "Death and life are in the power of the tongue." (*Ps.* xviii. 21.) If you employ it in prayer, in the confession of sins, or for the edification of your neighbour, you give life to your soul; if you employ it in raillery, slander, or deceit, you make it the instrument of spiritual death. Finally, if he cannot destroy their faith, he endeavours to rob them of charity and the practice of good works. "Faith without works is dead," (*James*, ii. 26,) and sinners frequently lose it by the disorder of an evil life. St. Chrysostom gives this reason: Because those of an evil life fearing lest its holy maxims should disquiet them, endeavour to stifle their belief. Those, says St. Gregory, who are first rebellious to the light, become

afterwards so blinded as not to see what they ought to do. If you practise that which you know, God will augment his lights in your mind; but if you are unfaithful, he will withdraw them and leave you in darkness.

2nd Point. Consider—"But if a stronger than he come upon him and overcome him, he will take away all his armour wherein he trusted, and will distribute his spoils." (*Luke*, xi. 22.) Thus does the Son of God vanquish the demon, and deliver man from his tyranny. *He comes upon him.* The heart of the sinner is the stronghold of the evil one. Jesus Christ alone can chase him thence: wherefore this unhappy soul must beseech him to enter and deliver her from that thraldom under which she groans. *He overcomes him*, by repressing his fury, restraining his power, and baffling his wiles. He takes away all his armour wherein he trusted; that is, the false maxims by which he deceives, and evil customs which are the bonds wherewith he detains the soul in captivity; but especially those sinners whom he uses as instruments to corrupt others. For Satan has his emissaries, as Jesus Christ has faithful ministers whom he employs for the salvation of his elect. And distributes his spoils. These are his graces, the gifts of the Holy Ghost, and infused virtues whereof Satan had plundered the soul, and which the Saviour of the world restores to the penitent sinner whom he re-establishes in grace.

3rd Point. Consider—"When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through places without water, seeking rest, and not finding, he saith: I will return into my house whence I came out." (*Luke*, xi. 24.) Such are the efforts of a demon to regain possession of a soul whence he has been banished. The "places without water" where the evil spirit seeks to console himself, are the hearts of worldlings, which, imbibing not the heavenly dew of piety, remain as sterile lands, producing only thorns. But although he peaceably

possesses these, he is not content. The fidelity of the virtuous occasions him more pain, than the frailty of the wicked can cause him malicious joy. Wherefore, "he saith: I will return into my house whence I came out. And when he is come, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then he goeth and taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and entering in they dwell there. And the last state of that man becomes worse than the first." (*Luke*, xi. 24, 25, 26.) The demon, though already vanquished, does not cease to tempt the victor. Therefore, you must vigilantly guard and unceasingly watch over all the movements of your heart, because the least negligence gives him an advantage. Wo to you were you to indulge in repose as if all were in peace, and your salvation secure, whilst in reality there is not a trace of the sanctity to which you should aspire discernible in your life. Even that which by the aid of divine grace you have with difficulty acquired, may be destroyed by a momentary negligence or infidelity.

FRIDAY.

On Jesus reproving the Pharisees who demanded a Miracle

1st Point. Consider—"Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying: Master, we would see a sign from thee." (*Matt.* xii. 38.) There are in the divine treasury some rare and extraordinary graces, imparted only to a few privileged souls; there are others ordinary and common to all, because God refuses no person the graces necessary for accomplishing his duty and securing eternal salvation. The nature of extraordinary graces, is to gain the will more speedily and efficaciously, elevating it suddenly to a sublime degree of perfection, by a transition surpassing the ordinary

laws which divine wisdom has established for the conduct of souls. Such was the grace that instantaneously changed St. Paul from a persecutor into an Apostle of Jesus Christ, and wrapt him into the third heaven. Ordinary graces, commencing with lesser, lead by degrees to greater in proportion to the correspondence they meet. Hence it is of the utmost importance to be faithful in employing the least, because God augments them in proportion to this fidelity. All should be content with ordinary graces, and it is dangerous to desire others, either for our conversion or greater perfection. Meditate the following reasons, and beseech our Lord to grant you a right understanding on this subject.

2nd Point. Consider—this demand is presumptuous, for being sinners, far from deserving particular favours, even ordinary graces are a gift of God's pure mercy. They are granted only in consideration of the merits of Jesus Christ, hence the least is of infinite price, and far transcending our deserts. To pretend to extraordinary favours, is a pride calculated to draw down the wrath of God and render us unworthy of the most ordinary, because "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." (*James*, iv. 6.) "Be you humbled, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in the time of visitation." (*Peter*, v. 6.) The demand is unjust. It is prescribing, instead of receiving the law from the hand of God. He is master of his graces; they are gratuitous gifts, which he distributes according to his good pleasure. Be satisfied, therefore, with that which has been given you. If it seem little, remember you would be more criminal, if instead of improving, you squander, as if you possessed it in profusion. Study only how to profit of what you have received from the goodness of God, and murmur not at his liberality to your brethren, lest he say to you, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will? Is thy eye evil because I am

good? I do thee no wrong: take what is thine, and go thy way."

3rd Point. Consider—this demand is captious and malicious. It is a pretext under which you shelter your attachment to certain vices or defects, as if ordinary grace sufficed not to disengage you therefrom. If you remain enslaved to irregular affections or customs, it is not grace, but your own co-operation that is wanting. They that are saved, or who here attain a high degree of sanctity, are not always those who have received greater graces. "The men of Ninive," says our Lord, "shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they did penance at the preaching of Jonas. And behold a greater than Jonas here." (*Matt.* xii. 41.) Which did the Jews or the Ninivites receive more signal graces? Nevertheless, the Ninivites were converted, and the Jews remained obstinate in their infidelity. "Amen I say to you, that the publicans and sinners shall go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of justice, and you did not believe him. But the publicans and sinners believed him: but you seeing it, did not even afterwards repent, that you might believe him." (*Matt.* xxi. 31, 32.) "Woe to thee Corozain, woe to thee Bethsaida. For if in Tyre and Sidon had been wrought the mighty works that have been wrought in you, they would have done penance long ago, sitting in sack-cloth and ashes. But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, at the judgment, than for you." (*Luke*, x. 13, 14.) O judgment of comparison, how dreadful thou art! nevertheless, how few there are who dread thee!

SATURDAY.

On the Mother of Jesus being declared Blessed.

1st Point. Consider—"And it came to pass: as he spoke those things, a certain woman from the crowd lifting up her voice said to him: Blessed is the womb that bore thee, and the paps that gave thee suck." (*Luke*, xi. 27.) The holy Virgin is blessed, because of her divine maternity: and in this quality she is worthy of praise, honour, and veneration. "For behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. Because he that is mighty hath done great things to me." (*Luke*, i. 48, 49.) The saints are termed blessed only after death, which gives the last trait to their sanctity, and secures their salvation. But with regard to the immaculate Virgin, death was not the commencement of her beatitude. In her divine maternity is found the commencement and the end of those great things that God has wrought for her, and through her, for the salvation of mankind.

2nd Point. Consider—"But he said: yea rather, blessed are they who hear the word of God, and keep it." (*Luke* xi. 28.) The holy Virgin is blessed because of her love for Jesus Christ, and her fidelity in observing his word. In this quality imitate her as your model, and as "the mother of fair love, of fear, and of knowledge, and of holy hope." The Son of God contradicts not the declaration of this woman, for the spirit of truth spoke by her lips; but he praises those who hear and practise his word, pointing out a beatitude that all may acquire by imitating the sanctity of his blessed mother, because virtue and merit, rather than greatness, constitute the happiness of this life. Whence St. Augustine says: the blessed Virgin was more happy in receiving Jesus Christ by faith, than in becoming his mother. After her example, then, love

Jesus Christ, listen to his words, practise his counsels, and you shall be blessed. Beseech your divine Saviour to give you the spirit of understanding, for without his aid, who is the oracle and light of his ministers, their instructions would only render you more culpable. How admirable soever their discourse, the heart will not respond unless he, with whom are "the words of eternal life," (*John*, vi. 69,) speak also interiorly. If you hear without observing his words; if you know, yet love not the truth; and having believed the law obey it not; your guilt and spiritual danger are great in proportion to the graces you have received and abused.

3rd POINT. Consider—"And in the multitude of the elect she shall have praise, and among the blessed she shall be blessed." (*Eccle.* xxiv. 4.) The holy Virgin is blessed because of her proximity to her divine Son, and the glory to which she is elevated in his heavenly kingdom. As this purest and holiest of creatures rendered to her Son and her God, while dwelling in this vale of mortality, a homage more profound, a love more ardent, than that of the most exalted heavenly intelligences, so has he placed her on a royal throne, to reign as queen of angels and saints throughout eternity. Under this title you should invoke her not only as enjoying the highest beatitude, but as the blessed medium through whose intercession you hope to obtain everlasting happiness. Thou art, says St. Bonaventure, the Mother of all the blessed; thou bringest them forth to grace and to glory; thou art, after God, the source of their joy, and the happiness of the citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem.

The disciple of Jesus and of his virgin Mother flies the tumult of the world; he turns away from idle talk; he meditates on the word of Jesus, and watches carefully over his heart and affections, that no thought may enter there to offend Jesus, or Mary, or the saints. Call with confidence on Jesus and Mary to be the guides of

your earthly pilgrimage, in the words of the Psalmist: "Perfect thou my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps be not moved." (*Ps.* xvi. 5.)

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY.

On Jesus sought for by his blessed Mother.

1st Point. Consider—"As he was yet speaking to the multitude, behold his mother and his brethren stood without seeking to speak to him. And one said unto him: Behold thy mother and thy brethren stand without seeking thee." (*Matt.* xii. 46, 47.) The blessed Virgin and the brethren of Jesus Christ seek him from a desire of beholding him and hearing his heavenly doctrine, but being prevented by the multitudes that surround him, are constrained to remain at the door. Some holy writers suppose, that knowing the envy of the Pharisees, who already deliberated on the means of taking away his life, they would draw him from the threatened danger. Learn hence, what should be your zeal for the honour of Jesus Christ. He that loves is interested in all that regards the person beloved. The blessed Virgin knew that her divine Son was omnipotent and needed no defence. Notwithstanding, she omits no effort on her own part to save him from injury. Examine yourself and see what is your zeal in defending his honour and glory. Happy will you be, if at the hour of death you can say, as did a fervent religious of the society of Jesus, that in all the actions of your life you have sought the glory of God alone!

2nd Point. Consider—"But he answering him that told him, said: Who is my mother, and who are my brethren? And stretching forth his hands towards his disciples, he said: Behold my mother and my brethren." (*Matt.* xxi. 48, 49.) Here you are instructed, that when

the honour and service of God are concerned, you are not to yield to considerations purely human and natural. If the ties of kindred would withdraw you from following the call of God, say: "Who is my mother, and who are my brethren?" God has more just claims on my love than parents or friends. "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me, and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me." (*Matt.* x. 37.) "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." (*Luke*, xiv. 26.)

3rd POINT. Consider—"And stretching forth his hand towards his disciples, he said: Behold my mother and my brethren. For whosoever shall do the will of my Father that is in heaven, he is my brother, and sister, and mother." (*Matt.* xii. 49, 50.) In these words the Son of God clearly teaches, in what consists the spiritual affinity you contract with him. Faith renders you the brother and sister of Jesus Christ, according to St. Gregory and St. Jerome. According to the word of Truth itself, he is his brother, his sister, and his mother, who is faithful to the divine will. Admirable virtue! that elevates thy votaries to so exalted a degree of honour, as to make them not only the friends, but even the brethren of Jesus Christ!

Grant, my God, that the heart thou hast formed for thyself alone, disengaged from all attachment to creatures, may seek its repose only in the accomplishment of thy divine will. Thy heart, O Jesus, is the true centre of mine, because thou art its last end and sovereign beatitude; therefore it cannot rest until it rests in thee, by a devoted and persevering love.

MONDAY.

On Jesus instructing the people by Parables.

1st Point. Consider—"And he spoke to them many things in parables. And his disciples came and said to him: Why speakest thou to them in parables?" (*Matt.* xiii. 3, 10.) The compassionate charity of the Son of God causes him to accommodate his instructions to the capacity of his auditors, making use of familiar comparisons to elevate their minds to a knowledge of things spiritual and divine. He veils his heavenly doctrine in sensible figures and similitudes, as he concealed his divine person in the lowly nature of man, in order to treat with him more intimately, and to conduct him more securely in the path to heaven. Jesus Christ instructs the people in parables, because they are a representation, whereby that which is hidden being made as it were sensible, enters the mind with more facility and pleasure. Those similitudes resemble the sacred veil of the sanctuary, shrouding the sanctity of his mysteries, inspiring a more profound respect, a more intense desire to learn, a more vigilant care to profit of and remember them Is it thus you listen to the word of God, or read his sacred truths? Is it in this way that you meditate the instructions of Jesus Christ?

2nd Point. Consider—"Why speakest thou to them in parables? Who answered and said to them: Because to you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven; but to them it is not given." (*Matt.* xiii. 10, 11.) To pronounce his sacred truths under the veil of parables, is an effect of the goodness of Jesus Christ, which always tends to the advantage of those who are desirous to profit of his instructions and graces; but it is also an effect of his justice which thus punishes the negligent. God confers his favours only on the industrious and faithful. In proportion as

they are abused he withdraws them, and his lights increase or weaken according as they are corresponded with. Had the Jews been better disposed to receive his doctrine, he would have spoken more clearly; but because they despised it, "therefore," he says, "do I speak to them in parables: because seeing, they see not, and hearing, they hear not, neither do they understand. For he that hath, to him shall be given, and he shall abound; but he that hath not, from him shall be taken away that also which he hath." (*Matt.* xiii. 13, 12.) Therefore he speaks enigmatically to those hardened hearts that abuse his graces, and having aids more than necessary to understand his instructions, nevertheless close their ears and eyes to the evidence of his truths and miracles. Wherefore in them is accomplished the prediction: "Hearing, hear, and understand not, and see the vision, and know it not. Blind the heart of this people, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and be converted, and I heal them." (*Isaiah*, vi. 9, 10.)

3rd Point. Consider—"But blessed are your eyes, because they see, and your ears because they hear." (*Matt.* xiii. 16.) To instruct the people in parables is also an effect of the infinite wisdom of Jesus Christ, who thus distinguishes between his friends and enemies, according to the observation of St. Chrysologus. "And he spoke to them many things in parables," (*Matt.* xiii. 3;) that is, to strangers, to his enemies, to those who listened only to misrepresent and calumniate his heavenly doctrine, not to those who sought in his divine words lessons of salvation. Had he not used these mystic terms, there would have been no distinction between the faithful and the infidel, the devout and the impious. The man of virtue would have been treated as the refractory, the zealous labourer as the faint-hearted, and he that watched as he that sleepeth. But

to his disciples the incarnate wisdom says: "To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven; but to them it is not given." (*Matt.* xiii. 11.) To the faithful, the docile, those who desire to learn and practise the secrets of heaven, he reserves the key of knowledge and understanding to enter into the mysteries of his church, and discover the secrets of his paternal care over those who constitute his spiritual kingdom. Blessed privilege! "For, amen I say to you, many prophets and just men have desired to see the things that you see, and have not seen them; and to hear the things that you hear, and have not heard them." (*Matt.* xiii. 17.)

TUESDAY.

On the Parable of the Cockle.

1st Point. Consider—"The kingdom of heaven is likened to a man that sowed good seed in his field But while men were asleep, his enemy came and oversowed cockle among the wheat, and went his way. And when the blade was sprung up, and had brought forth fruit, then appeared also the cockle." (*Matt.* xiii. 24, 25, 26.) In this parable the wicked are compared to cockle, because it deceives by a false appearance of good grain. In like manner, heretics and impious men conceal their vices and errors under specious pretexts, in order to seduce unwary souls. Cockle is pernicious to the good grain while both grow together; so the wicked by evil counsels and example endeavour to destroy in the hearts of those with whom they converse, the love and esteem of virtue. Finally, cockle is worthless, and fit only to be cast into the fire, and the impious must be consigned to the everlasting torments they have merited, unless by condign penance they avert the

threatened punishment. Shun, therefore, the society of the wicked, and beware of being yourself a cause of scandal to others, lest, like the cockle, you be cast into that fire that shall never be extinguished. Endeavour rather to be of the number of those of whom it is said: "Then shall the just shine as the sun in the kingdom of their father." (*Matt.* xiii. 43.)

2nd Point. Consider—"And the servants said to him: Wilt thou that we go and gather it up? And he said: No, lest, perhaps, gathering up the cockle, you root up the wheat also together with it. Suffer both to grow until the harvest." (*Matt.* xiii. 28, 29, 30.) Our Lord permits not the cockle to be rooted up, because, as St. Augustin observes, the wicked may be converted into good wheat. The evil spirit disseminates the cockle; but did men watch instead of sleeping, by the neglect of salvation, he would have no power over them. After all he may indeed deceive men who are indolent in their spiritual concerns, but cannot elude the vigilance of that eye which incessantly watches over the elect. Again, the cockle is permitted to grow, for if the wicked be not converted, they serve at least to exercise the virtuous, and afford them occasion of acquiring merit and enriching their crown. Were there no persecutors, there would be no martyrs; all things contribute to the salvation of those who love God. Whether then the wicked be converted or remain incorrigible, God is not less glorified. He shows forth his bounty in dispensing to them his favours; his patience in expecting them to repentance, his mercy in receiving them to grace, and his justice in chastising them when impenitent. For, in fine, he waits for them to the last, and it is with regret he suffers them to perish, because they are his creatures. "Thou art grieved," he says to the prophet Jonas, "for the ivy, for which thou hast not laboured, nor made it to grow, which in one night came up, and in one night perished.

And shall not I spare Ninive, that great city?" (*Jonas*, iv. 10, 11.)

3rd POINT. Consider—"Gather up first the cockle, and bind it into bundles to burn, but the wheat gather ye into my barn." (*Matt.* xiii. 30.) Which is the time of harvest, when the good grain shall be separated from the cockle? "The harvest is the end of the world, and the reapers are the angels." (*Matt.* xiii. 39.) Death shall cut down all men without distinction. "Thrust in thy sickle, and reap, because the hour is come to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe." (*Apoc.* xiv. 15.) "And I saw the dead, great and small, standing in the presence of the throne." (*Apoc.* xx. 12.) "For he must reign *until he hath put all his enemies under his feet.*" (1 *Cor.* xv. 25.) The harvest being reaped, the cockle is separated from the wheat. "So shall it be at the end of the world. The angels shall go out, and separate the wicked from among the just." (*Matt.* xiii. 49.) Woful destiny! to be for ever separated from God, cut off as a dead member from the mystic body of Christ, and banished eternally from the society of the saints! In fine, the cockle being separated from the wheat, the just from the wicked; these shall be bound into bundles "and burnt with fire." (*Matt.* xiii. 30, 40.) Thus, says St. Augustin, shall sinners be bound together; that is, those who have been accomplices in crime, shall be united in torments; those who have by evil example caused the decay of piety in communities, with those whom they have thus drawn from the fervour of their vocation.

WEDNESDAY.

On the Parable of the Mustard Seed.

1st POINT. Consider—"Another parable he proposed unto them, saying: The kingdom of heaven is

like to a grain of mustard seed." (*Matt.* xiii. 31.) Faith, which is called the kingdom of God, resembles the mustard seed, whereof the virtue becomes sensible only when it is bruised; so faith shines forth most powerfully in the saints under sufferings and persecution. The humility of faith, says St. Lawrence Justinian, conceals itself in prosperity, but in adversity rises in all the vigour of the spirit by which it is animated. Though you can neither add nor diminish with regard to the truths of faith, nevertheless, faith may help you to increase the numbers that receive it; and this should make you implore the conversion of heretics and infidels. Again, faith may increase in the fervour with which the faithful adhere to the doctrine of the church, and their esteem of the gospel maxims; regulating their lives by the principles of their faith, and advancing daily in this holy practice; this favour should be the subject of your prayer, both for yourself and the church in general. "Lord, increase our faith." (*Luke*, xvii. 5.) "I do believe, Lord, help my unbelief."

2nd Point. Consider—the church, which is also called the kingdom of God, resembles the mustard seed; because from the humblest commencement she has so rapidly increased as to surpass the greatest empires in extent and duration. In extent, for, as St. Prosper observes: The grace of Christianity has subdued many nations to the cross of Jesus Christ. In duration, for, as St. Augustin says, she is exalted above all the glory of the earth, which has no stability, being subject to the inconstancy and decay of time. All the empires of the earth shall at length perish; but the kingdom of Jesus Christ is the kingdom of all ages, the kingdom of eternity. "But in the days of those kingdoms, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, and his kingdom shall not be delivered up to another people: and it shall break in pieces, and shall consume all the kingdoms:

and itself shall stand for ever." (*Dan.* ii. 44.) Blessed kingdom, that shall never end, whose subjects are immortal! St. Teresa esteemed herself happy to die in the bosom of the militant church: what shall it be to live eternally in that of the church triumphant? "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, O Lord, they shall praise thee for ever and ever." (*Ps.* lxxxiii. 5.)

3rd Point. Consider—Jesus Christ with the saints who compose his heavenly kingdom, are compared to the mustard seed, because of their humility, by virtue of which the lowliest upon earth become the most elevated in heaven. Jesus Christ, says St. Ambrose, in his birth, was abject as the mustard seed, but in his ascension was exalted as the towering cedar. His branches are extended even to the extremities of the earth; the birds of heaven, that is, all the predestinate, repose under his shadow, and are nourished with his fruits. He was the mustard seed in his incarnation, says St. Chrysostom, and being bruised in his passion, communicates his virtues to all our spiritual actions. The subjects of the heavenly king have experienced its efficacy, and exhibited its qualities. They humbled themselves, and God exalted them. Kings and magistrates, observes St. Chrysostom, approach, as lowly suppliants, the tomb of a fisherman, and hold it an honour to be interred, not beside the apostles, but at the gates of their churches. Be you also, says Theophilact, like to the little grain of mustard seed, if you desire that God replenish you with glory. Be abject by humility, great by the fervour of charity. Be occupied in praising God during the night of this life, and he will give you to enjoy the effects of his love and mercy in the day of a blessed eternity.

THURSDAY.

On the Parable of the Treasure.

1st Point. Consider—"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in a field." (*Matt.* xiii. 44.) Jesus Christ is the treasure in which your heart should centre, his knowledge and love constitute your spiritual riches. The evangelic treasure, says Saint Jerome, is the divine word hidden under the sacred humanity of Jesus Christ, or the holy scripture, which is the depository of the knowledge of the Saviour. Holy scripture, in its full extent, is the field wherein is found this rich treasure, that is to say, Jesus Christ. But there is a treasure hidden, "man knoweth not the price thereof. Neither is it found in the land of them that live in delights." (*Job*, xxviii. 13.) Where then is it to be found? In the cross, in the most holy sacrament, and in heaven. You will not find Jesus Christ in the vanities and amusements of the world, neither in the indulgence of self-love or natural inclinations. The treasure of the sanctity he teaches is hidden from the eyes of the flesh, and only to be found by those of the spirit. The martyrs discovered and shed their blood to obtain its possession.

2nd Point. Consider—"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in a field, which a man having found, hid it, and for joy thereof, goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field." (*Matt.* xiii. 44.) Having found this treasure, you must renounce all things to purchase it, together with the field in which it is hidden. What should you not give to possess the treasure hidden in the cross, in the blessed sacrament, in heaven, and in the hearts of Jesus and Mary. The divine word concealed in our flesh, says St. Hilary, is the treasure hidden in the field. No one has a right to possess this treasure with the field that

contains it, unless by purchase. The possession of heavenly riches can be acquired only by renouncing whatever the world holds valuable. Did you understand the price of celestial treasures, you would, for their attainment, sacrifice all, not only without difficulty, but with joy. Love Jesus Christ, says St. Augustin, love his commandments and his counsels, and you shall soon experience that the virtuous feel in the testimony of a good conscience, a joy more pure and solid, even amidst the sufferings and trials of this life, than the wicked possess in all the false delights of this world

3rd Point. Consider—having discovered and purchased this treasure, wisdom and humility require that you hide it anew. Wisdom, because you have reason to apprehend being deprived of, or losing it through culpable neglect; consequently, if you are wise, guard it with extreme care. Humility, for you should not seek worldly glory; and if you are obliged to communicate to your neighbour the lights and graces of heaven with which you have been enriched, whilst your good works appear exteriorly for the glory of your heavenly Father, you should conceal your intention in the depth of your heart, satisfied that God beholds, and prepares for you a great recompense. "Deal with thy servant according to thy mercy, and teach me thy justifications. I am thy servant, give me understanding that I may know thy testimonies. Thy testimonies are wonderful, therefore my soul hath sought them. See my humiliation, and deliver me, for I have not forgotten thy law."

FRIDAY.

On the Parable of the Pearl and the Net cast into the Sea.

1st Point. Consider—"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like to a merchant seeking good pearls." (*Matt.* xiii. 45.) This precious pearl is the knowledge of Jesus Christ. The law and the prophets, says St. Jerome, and the knowledge of the ancient testament, are rich pearls; but there is one more rich, more precious than all; this is the knowledge of the Saviour, the mystery of his passion, and the secret of his resurrection. Again, the evangelic pearl is the love of Jesus Christ. Charity, says St. Augustin, is the precious pearl, without which all other treasures are worthless, whilst the possession of this alone fully satisfies every desire of the human heart. The sacred doctrine of Jesus Christ, according to the same father, possesses also the properties of the pearl. This pearl had long been concealed under the veil of mortality, as in its shell, in the depths of the sea of this world, amongst a gross and carnal people, as among the rocks; but you having found this precious pearl, learn from St. Ambrose how to insure its preservation. A precious stone, he observes, must be set in gold. Let your spirit, therefore, resemble refined gold by the fervour of charity, and the practice of the most exalted virtues, in order that it may be worthy to enshrine this evangelic pearl.

2nd Point. Consider—"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like to a merchant seeking good pearls. Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went his way, and sold all that he had, and bought it." (*Matt.* xiii. 45, 46.) The great occupation of a Christian is to seek the precious pearl of the gospel, and purchase it at any price whatsoever. You would make no difficulty of renouncing all things for gaining it, did you understand its value. He is a wise merchant who exchanges

that which he cannot long enjoy, for a treasure including all that can be desired, and placed beyond the vicissitudes and accidents to which temporal possessions are universally subject. It suffices not, says St. Chrysostom, to give all for the possession of Jesus Christ; you should, moreover, give it joyfully, being assured that whatever you give, you will always gain infinitely more. Whoever conceives perfectly the sweetness of heavenly life, willingly renounces those terrestrial objects which he loved heretofore. All seems vile in comparison of this only real treasure. The deceitful appearance of those false delights that captivated heretofore, is dissipated by the hideous aspect of their deformity, when the mind and heart are filled with the light and beauty of this priceless pearl.

3rd Point. Consider—"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like to a net cast into the sea, and gathering together of all kinds of fishes. Which, when it was filled, they drew out, and sitting by the shore, they chose out the good into vessels, but the bad they cast forth. So shall it be at the end of the world." (*Matt.* xiii. 47, 48, 49.) The religious state affords a peculiar facility to discover and preserve the evangelic pearl, that is, the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ. According to St. Paulinus, the worldly man, whose spiritual vision is obscured by the clouds of terrestrial cares or pleasures, has neither leisure nor opportunity to acquire this knowledge and love. There are, indeed, saints in every state in the church, who know and love Jesus Christ with their whole heart; but he warns us in the parable of the net cast into the sea, that in his church there are both good and bad, and that if the virtues of the former are a cause of hope, the great majority of the latter is not less a subject of fear. "So shall it be at the end of the world. The angels shall go out, and shall separate the wicked from the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be weeping and

gnashing of teeth." (*Matt.* xiii. 49, 50.) Then shall appear the advantage of living in the tranquillity of a religious state, removed from the pernicious examples and dangerous occasions in which so many souls daily perish. Labour now with unremitting vigilance in seeking the precious pearl of the love of Jesus, that on the day of final retribution you may enter into the peace and joy of the blessed. "Have you understood all these things?" (*Matt.* xiii. 51.) Practise them faithfully. Jesus shall be your treasure, and the most precious jewel of your eternal diadem.

SATURDAY.

On the Parable of the Father of the Family.

1st Point. Consider—"Therefore, every scribe instructed in the kingdom of heaven, is like to a man that is a householder, who bringeth forth out of his treasure new things and old." (*Matt.* xiii. 52.) "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth that which is evil. For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." (*Luke*, vi. 45.) In these texts our Lord inculcates the obligation of mingling spiritual discourse in ordinary conversations. His divine example is a motive of fidelity in this important duty. He says of himself: "For this was I born, and for this came I into the world, that I should give testimony of the truth." (*John*, xviii. 37.) He entered the world to treat of the excellence of divine truths, and to decry the maxims of the world. He descended from heaven to rescue souls from perdition, and conduct them to the term of salvation. His conversation, therefore, like the object of his mission, was divine. You also have received a being, were made a member of the

church, or called to the holy state of religion, to "give testimony of the truth." It is therefore unbecoming a Christian to speak the language of the world, or take pleasure in vain or frivolous conversation; but how much more unseemly in a religious, who is especially devoted and consecrated to the service of God. In the religious all should breathe sanctity, even to the least word. But what should be the conversation of those who are called to co-operate with Jesus Christ in the salvation of souls, and bear his name into the hearts of their brethren? "The mouth of the just shall meditate wisdom, and his tongue shall speak judgment. The law of his God is in his heart." (*Ps.* xxxvi. 30, 31.) When you speak of virtue, of justice, peace, truth, redemption, and eternal life, Jesus Christ is the subject of your conversation.

2nd Point. Consider—the love of Jesus Christ is an additional motive that impels the Christian, much more the religious, to converse frequently on spiritual matters. If through human respect you refrain from mingling piety in your ordinary discourse, it argues a want of esteem for such subjects; if you omit it through negligence or forgetfulness, this proves that your love for Jesus Christ is weak indeed. Those who love him, love to speak to him and of him, to listen to his divine voice, and make him the subject of their conversation. Of such may be said what St. Luke says of Apollo: "This man was instructed in the way of the Lord, and being fervent in spirit, spoke and taught diligently the things that are of Jesus." (*Acts*, xviii. 25.) "So that by all means," says St. Paul, "whether by occasion, or by truth, Christ be preached: in this also, I rejoice, yea, and will rejoice. For I know that this shall fall out to me unto salvation, through your prayer, and the supply of the spirit of Christ. According to my expectation and hope, that in nothing I shall be confounded, but with all confidence, as always, so now

also shall Christ be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain." (*Phil.* i. 18, *et seq*.) This is the outpouring of a heart that loves Jesus Christ with ardour, and burns with insatiable zeal for the glory of his name. These should also be your sentiments if you be his true disciple. You should desire to attract all hearts to this amiable master, and endeavour by spiritual discourse to enkindle around you the fire of his love.

3rd Point. Consider—another motive for loving spiritual conversation, is found in the invitation of Jesus Christ, and his promise to those who faithfully correspond therewith. Listen to his pressing invitation in the words of St. Augustin: "Open to me, thou art my sister in virtue of my blood; my dove, by the unction of my spirit; my perfect one, by the power of my word, of which thou hast received of me a more perfect understanding. Open to me, announce me, speak of me to those who have closed their hearts against me. For how can I enter, unless some one open to me the door?" Meditate also his promise: "Where there are two or three gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (*Matt.* xviii. 20.) This is effectively proved in the disciples journeying to Emmaus. As they conversed in the way of the passion and resurrection of the Son of God, he joined himself with them, and replenished their hearts with such heavenly sweetness, that "they said one to another, Was not our heart burning within us, whilst he spoke in the way?" (*Luke*, xxiv. 32.) What heart so cold as not to glow in the society of Jesus Christ? What can be wanting to those who enjoy his divine presence? Where Jesus is, there is peace, joy, and salvation. Frequently make him the subject of your conversation, and he will favour you with his company. Is not his presence an anticipated heaven?

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

On Jesus being despised in his own country.

1st Point. Consider—"And Jesus said to them: A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and in his own house, and among his own kindred. And he could not do any miracles there, only that he cured a few that were sick, laying his hands upon them." (*Mark*, vi. 4, 5.) Blindness and incredulity were the first effects of the envy the Nazarites bore to Jesus Christ. "Eat not with an envious man, and desire not his meats; because, like a soothsayer and diviner, he thinketh that which he knoweth not." (*Prov.* xxiii. 7.) The envious man is blind, he imagines that which is not, whilst his eyes are closed to truth. If the virtues of a brother are applauded in his presence, he maintains a cold silence, or insinuates some injurious suspicion. As he misinterprets the present, so he draws false conjectures for the future. These rash judgments proceed from pride. The envious would be elevated above all; and not being able to attain this end by other means, he endeavours to raise himself by judging his neighbour, which is an assumption of superiority. But the judgment of the envious is always one of censure and undervaluing, like that of those wicked men of whom the apostle says: "Do you not judge within yourselves, and are become judges of unjust thoughts?" (*James*, ii. 4.) Such were the enemies of our Saviour. They knew that the miracles wrought in Capharnaum were a subject of universal admiration; they were themselves touched with the unction of his discourse; nevertheless, they expressed themselves with that malignant dissimulation which envy dictates. "How came this man," they say, "by all these things? And what wisdom is this that is given to him, and such mighty works as are wrought by his hands? Is not this the

carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joseph, and Jude, and Simon?" (*Mark*, vi. 2, 3.)

2nd Point. Consider—calumny was another effect of the envy of these Jews. Between vices and virtues, observes St. Basil, there is a certain exterior similarity that renders discrimination difficult. Prodigality assumes the appearance of generosity: hypocrisy wears the semblance of devotion. Two classes of persons abuse this resemblance, that is, flatterers, and the envious. The former give the name of virtue to the vices of those from whom they seek their aggrandizement; the latter obscure the lustre of virtue by attributing to it the character of vice, in order to destroy the reputation of a brother. This malignant disposition the Son of God charitably reproves in the Jews. "And he said to them: doubtless you will say to me this similitude, Physician, heal thyself: as great things as we have heard done in Capharnaum, do also here in thy own country. And he said: Amen I say to you, that no prophet is accepted in his own country. In truth I say to you, there were many widows in the days of Elias in Israel, when heaven was shut up three years and six months, when there was a great famine throughout the earth. And to none of them was Elias sent, but to Serepta of Sidon, to a widow woman. And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed but Naaman the Syrian." (*Luke*, iv. 23, *et seq.*) Those who slight what is holy, are not favoured with heavenly gifts. Jesus Christ healed strangers and not the Nazarites, because grace is imparted, not to the country, but to the disposition of the suppliants. The gifts of God are only for those who watch and labour for their salvation.

3rd Point. Consider—"And all they in the synagogue, hearing these things, were filled with anger. And they rose up and thrust him out of the city: and

they brought him to the brow of the hill, whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong." (*Luke*, iv. 28, 29.) Injustice, to which they are stimulated by anger and indignation, is a third effect of the envy of the Jews. This vice leads to the most fatal extremities: it extinguishes faith, multiplies calumnies, invades the rights of justice, and overthrows its laws. Envy, when it cannot injure a brother, becomes furious against itself, and makes the felicity of others its own torment. Hence, St. Gregory Nazianzen says: there is nothing more unjust than envy, because it makes a brother's good the object of its hatred; nothing, at the same time, more just, for it constitutes its own punishment. Humility and charity are the remedy for this dangerous evil. The evangelist says of our Lord—"But he passing through the midst of them, went his way." (*Luke*, iv. 30.) Let virtue produce in you what he effected by miracle. Be humble, conceal yourself from the eyes of the world, seek not the favour of men, and you will not repine at their prosperity. Be charitable, love your neighbour as yourself: thus you will make his happiness your own, and without defrauding him enrich yourself by enjoying his prosperity.

MONDAY.

On Jesus sending his Apostles to announce the Gospel.

1st Point. Consider—why the Son of God sends his Apostles through the towns and villages. The Evangelists assign the motive in these words: "And Jesus went about all the cities and towns, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every infirmity. And seeing the multitudes, he had compassion on them: because they were distressed, and lying like sheep that

have no shepherd. Then he saith to his disciples: the harvest indeed is great, but the labourers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he send forth labourers into his harvest." (*Matt.* ix. 35, *et seq.*) "And he called the twelve; and began to send them two and two." (*Mark*, vi. 7.) Admire the tender compassion and ardent zeal with which the heart of Jesus burns to console and save mankind. This charitable shepherd beholding his flock languid, not only from corporal evils, but still more spiritual misery; and dispersed by discord, schisms, and errors, descended from heaven to gather these strayed sheep, and sweetly lead them back to the fold. His intense desire to save the unbelieving, is the hunger that presses and allows him no repose. When therefore you are attacked by temptation, or encounter some sensible affliction, raise your eyes to the charitable heart of your Saviour; and considering yourself as a sheep pursued by the wolf, cast yourself into the arms of this good shepherd: he will not reject, but rather present you with his grace in order to hasten your return.

2nd Point. Consider—how the Son of God animates the hearts of his disciples with zeal for the salvation of souls. "The harvest," he says, "indeed is great, but the labourers are few." How many are daily lost, who would be saved were there evangelic labourers to instruct them; but alas there are few! "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he send forth labourers into his harvest." Dispose yourself by prayer to labour usefully, and to draw down those graces necessary for succeeding therein. To God it belongs to send labourers. Nevertheless he requires that you pray, in order to teach you the power and efficacy of prayer, of which he makes so much account, that without it he will not execute even what his goodness and mercy seem to demand. Frequently the decrees of his providence are conditional, because he has resolved to grant

certain signal graces for the conversion of souls, only through the channel of fervent prayer. He awaited that of St. Stephen to give St. Paul to the church. St. Augustin was converted through the prayers and tears of St. Monica. Doubt not that he awaits yours also in order to bless your labours. The workmen he requires are those of whom the Psalmist speaks: "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." (*Ps.* cxxv. 5.)

3rd Point. Consider—the power given to the disciples to fulfil their office with authority and success. "He called the twelve:" for a particular vocation and extraordinary grace are necessary to undertake a work that is all divine "And began to send them two and two," giving them thereby an opportunity of exercising mutual charity and humility; also that each might have a guardian of his conduct; leaving an example to religious, who observe this custom in imitation of the primitive disciples of their divine Master. "He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of diseases, and all manner of infirmities," (*Matt.* x. 7,) adding to the gift of miracles, spiritual jurisdiction and authority for the direction of souls Meditate the justice which God exercises over the proud. The rebel angels would exalt themselves even to the throne of the divinity; and behold! he casts them down beneath the feet of twelve poor fishermen, who receive from the Incarnate Word absolute power over them. Adore also the infinite goodness of the Saviour of the world towards mankind. Adam by disobedience had entailed corporal infirmities on his posterity. Jesus Christ confers on his Apostles the power of healing not only corporal but spiritual maladies. He encourages them saying, "Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid." (*John*, xiv. 27.) "Have confidence in me: is anything difficult to me? or am I like to those who promise but perform not? Where is your faith?" (*Imit.* b. iii. 30.)

TUESDAY.

On Jesus instructing his Apostles before their Mission.

1st Point. Consider—"Go ye not into the way of the Gentiles, and into the cities of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go ye rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (*Matt.* x. 5, 6.) Thus the Son of God selects the place most suitable for the mission of his Apostles. He circumscribes the sphere of their zeal, because they had not yet received the plenitude of the Divine Spirit. Therefore he proportions their labour to their strength, and sends them to make an essay, that they may learn to use the weapons of the heavenly warfare before attacking the universal world. He announces the gospel first to the faithful, because to them God had given the law, and promised the Messiah; but that ungrateful people having despised this inestimable favour, he afterwards transfers it to the Gentiles, who receive it with more gratitude and better appreciate its value. Learn to fear the judgments of God, and beware of neglecting the opportunities afforded for securing your salvation, lest he choose another in your place, who will bear away your crown.

2nd Point. Consider—"And going preach, saying: The kingdom of heaven is at hand." (*Matt.* x. 7.) "And going forth they preached that men should do penance." (*Mark*, vi. 12.) The Son of God recommends to his Apostles the peculiar subject of their preaching. This Divine Master had inspired St John the Baptist to choose the same for the instruction of the people, and finally adopted it himself, to the end that this conformity of sentiment might more solidly establish belief in so important a dogma. For the kingdom of God consists in the reign of his love in our hearts, by which he renders us partakers in his beatitude; a favour exceeding all the heart of man can conceive. O! if thou

hadst seen the everlasting crowns of the saints in heaven, and in how great glory they now triumph, who appeared contemptible heretofore to this world, and in a manner even unworthy of life, doubtless thou wouldst immediately cast thyself down to the very earth, and wouldst rather seek to be under the feet of all, than to have command over so much as one. Neither wouldst thou covet the pleasant days of this life, but wouldst rather be glad to suffer tribulation for God's sake, and esteem it thy greatest gain to be reputed as nothing amongst men. (*Imit.* iii. 47.) Yet, O fatal blindness! to gain a heavenly treasure, an inestimable recompense, a glory immeasurable and eternal, you will not undergo a light mortification, or renounce a fleeting pleasure! Blush, ungenerous soul, that thinkest the little that God demands of thee too severe or difficult: blush to behold the slaves of the world more ardent in the pursuit of their everlasting ruin, than thou in seeking eternal glory.

3rd Point. Consider—the Son of God points out to his Apostles the virtues necessary for apostolic men. He confers on them the gift of miracles, but enforces the exercise of heroic virtue as their indispensable qualification for the sacred ministry; because this alone unites them to God, without whose aid all their labours are fruitless; and also because a holy life makes the deepest impression on the minds of those with whom they treat. Sanctity, in effect, is truly a miracle, changing what is earthly and human into that which is heavenly and divine. This is the only miracle that God imperatively demands. The Jews desire miracles from the Son of God, but the only one he promises is that of his death and sepulture. Make this the object of your imitation. Crucify your passions, eradicate the inordinate propensities of self-love, and let the love of Jesus Christ alone live in your heart if you would draw souls to his service. Do you say you are not called to

so important a ministry? All can and ought to take part therein, says St. Gregory. Therefore do all in your power to draw many after you in the path to heaven. If you walk sincerely towards God, endeavour not to go alone. For it is written: "And he that heareth, let him say: Come." (*Apoc.* xxii. 17.)

WEDNESDAY.

On Jesus instructing his Apostles in Humility and Poverty.

1st Point. Consider—"Freely have you received, freely give." (*Matt.* x. 8.) The Son of God admonishes his Apostles that the gift of miracles being a purely gratuitous favour, should not inspire them with vanity. God, who is infinitely jealous of his glory in the conversion of souls, chooses the humble as his instruments in this great work, because they refer all the honour to its true source, saying with David: "The right hand of the Lord hath wrought strength." (*Ps.* cxvii. 16.) The conversion of souls is a divine operation, in which man is but the organ, and acts only through the influence of the Spirit of God. The more perfect his humility, the more amply is he replenished with this spirit; consequently he is divested of self-esteem, more submissive to the will of God, who, meeting no resistance to his designs, employs him where and as he pleases, for his own glory and the salvation of his creatures. "Great is the power of God alone, and he is honoured by the humble." (*Eccles.* iii. 21.) The conversion of souls is dependent on their free will, which can only be gained by love; this humility effects, sweetly insinuating itself into the most untractable minds. This virtue is not less necessary to an apostolic man for preserving his peace and insuring his salvation. Without it he will

be dazzled by human applause, or if his opinions are contradicted, his designs thwarted, he will fall into great disorders. Annihilate every desire of honour and esteem, saying with your divine Master: "I seek not my own glory." (*John*, viii. 50.)

2nd Point. Consider—"Do not possess gold nor silver, nor money in your purses." (*Matt.* x. 9.) Poverty and detachment from terrestrial things are virtues essential for those called to imitate the apostolic life. A spirit of poverty is necessary for their own sanctification, because it is the foundation of a spiritual life, a virtue which Jesus Christ practised from his entrance into the world, and has placed at the head of his beatitudes. It is equally necessary for the salvation of their brethren, in order to convince them by a generous contempt of earthly goods, that these are truly despicable, and that God alone is the sovereign good, to be preferred before all things. Prefer the glorious opprobrium of the passion of Jesus Christ to all the riches of the world. Listen to your Divine Master saying: "*If you love me, feed my sheep.*" Feed them as mine, seeking my glory and interest, not your own, in the care bestowed on their salvation. A man who possesses and desires to possess Jesus Christ alone, is capable of performing prodigies! He can say with his divine Master, "If I be lifted up from the earth," by detachment from terrestrial goods, "I will draw all things to myself." (*John*, xii. 32.)

3rd Point. Consider—"Freely have you received, freely give." How widely extended should be the charity of those called to continue the vocation of the apostles? With what liberality should they dispense the gifts of their master? He that loves wisdom, according to St. Augustin, calls upon all creatures to unite with him in glorifying the Lord. He desires that all adore, love, and possess with him the only sovereign good. He labours to enkindle in all hearts

the fire of divine love. He desires that all be enlightened by the Sun of Justice. He calls upon all, saying: "Praise the Lord with me." Should not those who have been honoured with the divine vocation of co-operating with Jesus Christ in the salvation of souls redeemed with his precious blood, evince as indefatigable a zeal in drawing all to God, as sinners are ardent and ingenious in their efforts to involve others in their own ruin? Attend to the solemn admonition of the Apostle: "I charge thee before God and Jesus Christ, who shall judge the living and the dead, by his coming and his kingdom: Preach the word: be instant, in season, out of season: reprove, entreat, rebuke in all patience and doctrine."

THURSDAY.

On Jesus recommending to his Apostles a social and peaceable Spirit.

1st Point. Consider—"And into whatsoever town or city you shall enter, inquire who in it is worthy, and there abide you till you go thence." (*Matt.* x. 11.) The Apostolic life is not a life of solitude, isolated from human society. You must lead your neighbour to God by edifying conversation and the example of a holy life As evangelical missioners should have no attachment to the goods of the earth, neither should they indulge a preference to any particular place of residence. They are not to consider whether those they treat with are rich, noble, liberal; but what are their spiritual necessities. "He that receiveth you," says Jesus Christ, "receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me." (*Matt.* x. 40.) The Son of God cherishes his disciples with such affection, that he recompenses those who assist them, as if their

charity were exercised towards himself. "He that receiveth a just man in the name of a just man, shall receive the reward of a just man." (*Matt.* x. 41.) How consoling this promise, to those who, though precluded by their condition from the apostolic functions, may, nevertheless, participate in their merits, by co-operating with those who are called to this glorious work!

2nd Point. Consider—"And when you come into the house salute it, saying: Peace be to this house." (*Matt.* x. 12.) The children of God should be, like their divine Master, the harbingers of peace and happiness wherever they enter. Therefore, he forbids them to carry in their journeys either gold, the cause of discord, or a staff, the instrument of vengeance, according to the observation of St. Ambrose. "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, of them that bring glad tidings of good things." (*Rom.* x. 15.) The good which the evangelic missioner announces, is no other than Jesus Christ, the universal good, who dwells in peace, and is the source of grace. "Let peace be thy strength, and abundance in thy towers. For the sake of my brethren and my neighbours, I spoke peace to thee." (*Ps.* cxxi. 7, *et seq.*) Such should be the object of your zealous exertions. Weary not in labouring for the peace and salvation of your brethren: your recompense depends not on the fruit, but on the purity of intention and ardour with which you seek the greater glory of God. "And if that house be worthy, your peace shall come upon it; but if it be not worthy, your peace shall return to you." *Matt.* x. 13.)

3rd Point. Consider—"And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, going forth from thence, shake off the dust from your feet for a testimony to them." (*Mark*, vi. 11.) The Son of God commands his disciples to *shake off the dust from their feet*, to testify against those who reject them, that they offer not their

services through interested motives. He enjoins his Apostles this act, as a declaration to obdurate sinners, that so long as these remain the enemies of God, they will possess nothing in common with them, not even the dust of the earth. He also enjoins it as a warning to the impenitent, that at the day of final retribution, every part of creation, even to the ground they tread on, will rise in judgment against them. Meditate deeply these awe-striking words of Jesus Christ—"Amen, I say to you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city." (*Matt.* x. 15.) How severely will divine justice chastise those who reject his heralds and despise his word, since, according to the assurance of Jesus Christ, Sodom and Gomorrah will be treated with less rigour!

FRIDAY.

On Jesus instructing his Apostles in Meekness, Prudence, and Simplicity.

1st Point. Consider—"Behold I send you as sheep in the midst of wolves." (*Matt.* x. 16.) Jesus Christ would have his disciples imitate the invincible meekness of which he has given so many and such touching examples. This good shepherd sends his sheep amongst wolves, but he has promised: "They shall not perish for ever, and no man shall pluck them out of my hand." (*John*, x. 28.) If he exposes them to the fury of the wolf, it is to exercise their patience, to crown their victory, and show forth the power of his grace, in changing wolves into lambs. Sheep of the fold of Christ, fear nothing! you have received your commission from him whose omnipotence has created, whose wisdom governs, and whose goodness preserves the universe. He could

end you as lions, but it is more expedient for his glory and your merit, that lambs should vanquish wolves! Examine whether you belong to the fold of the good shepherd. Does the meekness of the lamb mark your conduct? Do you shun the world as the lamb flies the wolf? Do you love your Pastor, listen to his voice, and endeavour to walk in his footsteps? If you resemble the lamb you may draw souls to Jesus Christ; but if you indulge, through the illusion of a mistaken zeal, natural harshness or impetuosity, you may certainly be defeated.

2nd Point. Consider—"Be ye therefore wise as serpents." (*Matt* x. 16.) Jesus Christ proposes to his disciples the prudence of the serpent, as the model of that which should regulate their zeal. The serpent is remarkable for caution. You should, therefore, watch with unremitting vigilance against the enemies of your salvation. It is not reasonable to forget what you owe yourself, in labouring for the salvation of others. Rather lead souls to heaven by so secure a path, that you may be the first to enter thereby. The serpent closes its ears against the voice of the enchanter. Let the remembrance of death render you deaf to the maxims of the world. The serpent periodically renews its skin. You should be renewed in spirit by continual and universal mortification The serpent supplies by subtility its want of strength, and is quick-sighted in discovering danger. You should distrust your own strength, and avail yourself of those lights which God imparts, to discover and remedy your spiritual evils. The serpent exposes his body for the preservation of his head. Preserve inviolable a union with Jesus Christ, who is your mystic head: separated from him you can perform no action worthy of eternal life. But though your body were torn to pieces or cast into flames, so long as you are faithful to your Divine Head, your spiritual life is in safety, your salvation is secure.

3rd Point. Consider—"Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and simple as doves." (*Matt.* x. 16.) "I would have you to be wise in good, and simple in evil." (*Rom* xvi. 19.) Simplicity without prudence is weakness of mind; prudence without simplicity degenerates into malice. Prudence guards you against the snares of the wily; simplicity prevents you deceiving others. Prudence teaches you silence; simplicity renders you sincere in expression Prudence makes you discreet in action; simplicity directs the attention purely to God. These virtues are essential to apostolic labourers. Examine whether, like the dove, you are void of bitterness, anger, or vindictiveness; knowing neither artifice nor malice, but amiable to all by meekness and gentleness. These are qualities that form a missionary according to the spirit and example of Jesus Christ, and constitute the sweet odour by which you are to attract many to his service.

SATURDAY.

On Jesus encouraging his Apostles to suffer Persecution.

1st Point. Consider—"But beware of men. For they will deliver you up in councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues." (*Matt.* x. 17.) The Son of God prepares his disciples for the trials that await them. He warns them to consider worldly men as persecutors, from whom they can expect only contradiction, treachery, opprobrium, and outrage. Therefore the prudence of the serpent is necessary to prevent, and the simplicity of the dove to endure, their tyranny with uncomplaining meekness. The labours of an evangelic missioner are so liable to be opposed by men, that unless armed with solid and untiring patience, he can never effect great or permanent good "Even unto

this hour we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no fixed abode. And we labour, working with our own hands: we are reviled, and we bless; we are persecuted, and we suffer it. We are blasphemed, and we entreat; we are made as the refuse of this world, and the off-scouring of all even until now." (*Cor.* iv. 11, 12, 13.) All this you must resolve on embracing, if you would labour profitably in the service of Jesus Christ.

2nd Point. Consider—"But when they shall deliver you up, take no thought how or what to speak: for it shall be given you in that hour what to speak. For it is not you that speak, but the spirit of your Father that speaketh in you." (*Matt.* x. 19, 20.) Learn from this instruction of the Saviour, when treating on the duties of your ministry with persons of the world, neither to yield to anxiety, nor confide in your own judgment, because it is on the Spirit of God you should depend for necessary light. Listen therefore to the words of the Apostle: "Now we have received not the spirit of this world, but the spirit that is of God." (1 *Cor.* ii. 12.) Conclude then with St. Augustin: The spirit of God alone can know that which is of God. It is said in the gospel to those who speak by the spirit of God: *It is not you that speak;* and it may be said to all that love and practise virtue: It is not you, it is the spirit of your heavenly Father, that loves and practises it in your person. Yes! it is through the Holy Spirit alone you can love what is good; it is properly that Divine Being who delights in what is thus pleasing to you, as it is he who infuses into your heart, the unction by which you relish it.

3rd Point. Consider—"And when they shall persecute you in this city, flee into another. Amen, I say to you, you shall not finish all the cities in Israel, till the Son of Man come" (*Matt.* x. 23) to judge the world and crown your labour. Jesus Christ counsels

his Apostles to fly persecution, not through fear, but from an heroic courage, animated by love, and sustained by wisdom. St. Athanasius observes, that it is more generous to fly than endure death. Death puts a period to suffering, whereas he that flies protracts his trials. Wherefore, continues this Father, he that dies in voluntary banishment, merits the crown of martyrdom. The greatest saints have been fugitives, and in the midst of this suffering and abjection have received signal favours from God. Jesus Christ himself, who came to save mankind by the death of the cross, was pleased to fly from the tyranny of Herod. When he sends his Apostles to convert the world, before exhorting to brave, he admonishes them to shun, death, adducing as a motive, that they must preserve their lives for announcing the gospel, to which they are to draw all nations, before he will come to judge the world.

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

On Jesus animating his Apostles to Martyrdom.

1st Point. Consider—"And you shall be hated by all men for my name's sake." (*Matt.* x. 22.) Jesus predicts persecution, to prepare his apostles for the sufferings they shall afterwards endure. St. Hilary observes, that anticipated knowledge of evil gives patience and resolution in suffering. Our Lord proposes as a motive of encouragement, that *it is for his name's sake they shall be persecuted.* He had previously strengthened their confidence by the consideration of his power. It is "I," the Omnipotent, that "send you as sheep in the midst of wolves;" have confidence, *I* will render you invincible. Now he tells them it is for his sake they shall suffer persecution, in order to fortify their resolution, by the consideration of his love. "Love is an excellent thing, a great good indeed, which alone maketh

light all that is burdensome, and equally bears all that is unequal. Whosoever is not ready to suffer all things, and to stand resigned to the will of his beloved, is not worthy to be called a lover." (*Imit.* b. iii. c. 5.)

2nd POINT. Consider—"But he that shall persevere to the end shall be saved." (*Matt.* x. 22.) Sufferings without perseverance merit not the crown of immortality. Whatever good you have effected, whatever trials sustained, you can never be saved unless you are faithful even unto death. All former victories would prove unavailing, should you unhappily be vanquished in the last all-important combat. A long life of sanctity cannot save you, if the last moment surprise you in sin. Perseverance, writes St. Bernard, is the glory of the saints and the crown of their virtues. It is the nerve of your strength, the consummation of virtues, the crown of merit, the mediatrix of recompense, the sister of patience, the rampart of sanctity. If perseverance fails, services merit no reward, benefits lose their value, and the most glorious actions forfeit the praise and honour they had acquired,

3rd POINT. Consider—"The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his Lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his Lord. If they have called the good man of the house Beelzebub, how much more then of his household? Therefore, fear them not." (*Matt.* x. 24, *et seq.*) Admire the tender charity of Jesus, who has vouchsafed to bear calumny and persecution, in order to console and fortify his followers by his example. You who are the servant, learn patience of our Lord and Master. Be consoled in your sufferings, and hold it as honour to be treated as was your Saviour. To you he addresses these words—"From the hour of my birth, till my expiring on the cross, I was never without suffering." (*Imit* b. iii c. 18.) Do you reply with a tender and animated affection: "Lord, because thou wast pa-

tient in thy life time, in this chiefly fulfilling the commandment of thy Father, it is fitting that I, a wretched sinner, should, according to thy will, take all with patience, and, as long as thou pleasest, support the burden of this corruptible life, in order to my salvation. For thy life is our way: and by holy patience we walk on to thee, who art our crown."

MONDAY.

On Jesus animating his disciples to suffer. (*Continued.*)

1st Point. Consider—"Therefore, fear them not. For nothing is covered that shall not be revealed: nor hid that shall not be known." (*Matt.* x. 26.) That is, according to St. Jerome and St. Hilary, fear neither the machinations, the menaces, nor the power of your persecutors, for the day of universal judgment shall discover their malice and impotence; then shall you understand how vain and contemptible their efforts. Or fear not those who oppose the preaching of the gospel. I will add to your words an irresistible light and power. Therefore, proclaim confidently my doctrine. "That which I tell you in the dark, speak ye in the light; and that which you hear in the ear, preach ye upon the house-tops." (*Matt* x. 27.) Imprint, says St. Hilary, in all minds the knowledge of God, with invincible constancy. The light of the apostolic word should discover with a holy liberty, the most profound secrets of the gospel. "Get thee up upon a high mountain, thou that bringest good tidings to Jerusalem: lift it up, fear not. Say to the cities of Juda: behold your God!" (*Isaiah*, xl. 9.)

2nd Point. Consider—"And fear ye not them that kill the body, and are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him that can destroy both soul and body

into hell." (*Matt.* x. 28) Engrave deeply in your soul this important maxim. A servant of Jesus Christ should fear nothing but sin. You dread a slight injury, a passing inconvenience, and you fear not to incur the anger of God, and the penalty of eternal damnation. Implore a right understanding of eternal evils, and meditate upon them in the depth of your soul; thus you will banish the fear of temporal suffering, and be preserved from those which alone are justly to be dreaded. A salutary fear will nourish a spirit of contrition for past sins, and prove a secure preventive against future relapses. "The souls of the just are in the hand of God, and the torment of death shall not touch them." (*Wisdom*, iii. 1.)

3rd Point. Consider—"Do not think that I came to send peace upon earth: I came not to send peace, but the sword. He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not up his cross and followeth me, is not worthy of me." (*Matt.* x. 34, 37, 38.) Your Divine Master will have you wage an unrelenting war with the flesh the world, your passions, and inordinate affections. Wherefore, he presents you a two-edged sword, his law and his love, to destroy his enemies. Those things to which you are inordinately attached, and concupiscence, that dwells within you, are his, and consequently your, most dangerous enemies. Moreover, you must hate yourself if you would love Jesus Christ. Therefore, bear the cross, which is an instrument of death, and bear it daily. "He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that shall lose his life for me, shall find it." (*Matt.* x. 39.) This promise encouraged the apostles to proclaim the cross of Christ, and bear it courageously throughout the earth. The same sustained the martyrs under their torments: "though in the sight of men they suffered torments, their hope is full of immortality. Afflicted in few things, in many they shall be well re-

warded, because God had tried them and found them worthy of himself." (*Sap.* iii. 4, 5.)

TUESDAY.

On St. John put to death by Herod.

1st Point. Consider—"And the king was struck sad. Yet because of his oath, and because of them that were with him at table, he would not displease her: but sending an executioner, he commanded that his head should be brought in a dish." (*Mark*, vi. 27.) Behold in the person of St. John how Jesus Christ treats his most favoured children during life. The most intimate and tender union had subsisted between the heart of Jesus and that of his beloved precursor, even from the womb of their mothers; nevertheless, St. John passed thirty years in the desert, deprived of the consolation of conversing with the Son of God; and when at the baptism of our Lord that happiness was permitted him, it was but momentary. When confined to a dungeon, and going to lay down his life for the glory of Jesus Christ, the scripture does not say that he was favoured by a visit from his Divine Master. From this example you learn a three-fold lesson, that is, willingly to relinquish even spiritual consolations, to conform your will in all things to the dispositions of Divine Providence, and generously to devote yourself to the discharge of duty, without seeking sensible consolation, or even reflecting whether or not you are visited from on high. To all the saints may be applied what St. Fulgentius says of the children in the fiery furnace: had they desired to live in delicacies, never would they have triumphed over the flames.

2nd Point. Consider—"And he beheaded him in the prison, and brought his head in a dish, and gave it

to the damsel, and the damsel gave it to her mother." (*Mark*, vi. 28.) Behold in the person of St. John, how Jesus Christ treats his most favoured children at the hour of death. The life of the *greatest amongst the children of men* is forfeited for a base and frivolous diversion. That venerable head is placed in the hands of a worthless wretched being, and borne in a dish to the festive hall, as a blood-stained banquet, to satiate the eyes of the impious. His pure and generous blood is shed upon the earth to be trodden on, and cast forth into the sewers of a prison. That sacred tongue which rendered a testimony so glorious to the Incarnate Word, pronounced so many oracles, converted so many sinners, sustained the truth, and combated vice with such invincible courage, is pierced by the fury of a vile woman! And does he complain of so rigorous a treatment? On the contrary, he receives it as a singular favour. Death cannot still the *voice* sent to announce the advent of our Lord, or prevent his proclaiming the glory of his Master in the prison of Limbo, whither his blessed soul descends, bearing the tidings of the general peace established between God and man. Once more, adore the inscrutable judgments of God! and learn from this martyr of purity, to embrace with filial affection, both in life and death, every appointment of Providence.

3rd Point. Consider—in what manner God recompenses the just, and chastises the sinner after death. St. John, by suffering and death, acquires the crown of martyrdom. In reproving iniquity he loses his life for justice sake, but he secures the possession of immortal glory. Have you never endangered your salvation by flattering the vices, or weakly condescending to the disorders of those whom you might or ought to have charitably admonished, forfeiting everlasting happiness through human respect? Reflect how avenging justice speedily smites the authors of St. John's death; for anticipating their final condemnation and punish-

ment, they are reduced to the condition of outcasts not long after the perpetration of their crime. Behold in the former example how the crosses and sufferings of the saints terminate in everlasting joy. In the latter hour the end of all worldly delights is hopeless and never ending misery. For grace and peace is to his elect. "But the wicked shall be punished according to their own devices: who have neglected the just, and have revolted from the Lord. For dreadful are the ends of a wicked race." (*Wisdom*, iii. 10, 19.)

WEDNESDAY.

On the return of the Apostles after their Mission.

1st Point. Consider—"And the Apostles coming together unto Jesus, related to him all things that they had done and taught." (*Mark*, vi. 30.) The mission of the apostles was prosperous. The fame of their preaching and miracles attracted many to their Divine Master, and his reputation extended even to the halls of the great, where subjects of piety are seldom heard. Reflect on the supine indifference of worldlings in all that concerns the service of God, and their own eternal salvation. During two years had the Son of God preached and wrought miracles in Galilee, followed by an incredible concourse of people; nevertheless, Herod, who governed that province, had not yet seen him, or heard his heavenly doctrine. What a barrier do pride and sensuality oppose to the impression which the truths of eternity would otherwise make on the soul! The voluptuous prince in the end desired to see Jesus, but this desire, dictated by curiosity and vanity, only obtained its effect to fill the measure of his iniquities, by mocking the Holy of Holies. Religious soul, has the spirit of the world any share in you? Do you *seek the things*

that are above with as great zeal as the lovers of the world do the things that belong to it? If you would find God, seek him with sincerity and simplicity.

2nd Point. Consider—with what joy the apostles return to their Divine Master, and the tender reception they meet from his paternal goodness. The disciples of St. John also repair to Jesus, imploring that he would become to them a master and a father. The Son of God receives them with affection, consoles them in their affliction, and ranks them amongst his disciples. Happy transition, by which they pass from the precursor to the Messiah—from the creature to the Creator! What will be the joy of a soul, who, after having laboured indefatigably during this fleeting life, shall, at the moment of death, the term of our general mission, hear these words—"Well done, good and faithful servant: because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." (*Matt.* xxv. 23.) On the contrary, what confusion will overwhelm the slothful servant, who, remaining *all the day idle*, shall return to the master of the vineyard, only to hear the terror-striking sentence —"Give an account of thy stewardship." (*Luke*, ii. 31.)

3rd Point. Consider—"And he said to them, come apart into a desert place and rest a little." (*Mark*, vi. 31.) Our Divine Lord retires with his disciples into solitude, that they may repose after the fatigue of their mission. Admire the tender charity and paternal solicitude with which he watches over his faithful servants amidst their labours and sufferings during the present life, which is their harvest season of merit. The repose he affords them is short. "Repose a little." But one day, the afflictions of this life being terminated, he will invite them to that life of bliss, where for eternity "they shall rest from their labours." (*Apoc.*) The example of the Son of God on this occasion, instructs you that when engaged in the holiest duties for the salvation of you.

neighbour, you should, at stated periods, withdraw into solitude, giving yourself to prayer and self-examination, in order to repair your spiritual vigour, which is insensibly dissipated by exterior occupations, however good in themselves. If such recollection and retirement were necessary for the apostles, while enjoying the society of Jesus Christ, how much more for you, who are so inattentive to his divine presence, and so frequently permit your mind to expand on exterior objects, or in pursuit of inordinate gratifications.

THURSDAY.

On Jesus followed by the People into the Desert.

1st Point. Consider—"After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is that of Tiberias, and a great multitude followed him, because they saw the miracles which he did on them that were diseased." (*John*, vi. 1, 2.) A secret virtue, a fascinating grace in the adorable person of Jesus Christ, the touching unction of his words, the blended majesty and sweetness that beamed from his countenance, the miraculous works he operated, and the favours he so liberally dispensed, attracted all hearts to his love. The people came forth in crowds from the towns and villages, seeking his divine instructions with as much avidity as the thirsty hind does the refreshing fountain; and forgetful of their corporal necessities, they feasted on his words and countenance, which engrossed all the faculties of their souls. This multitude presents an image of what the Incarnate Word operates in his elect. He draws them by the triple chain of his word, his grace, and his benefits. "Draw me; we will run after thee in the odour of thy ointments." (*Cant.* i. 3.)

2nd Point. Consider—"And they ran flocking

thither on foot from all the cities, and were there before them." (*Mark*, vi. 33.) The fervour with which the multitude followed Jesus Christ affords an admirable example to the just. Examine attentively the circumstance, that you may imitate them; they follow him on foot, consequently with pain and labour; they go with such speed as even to arrive before the disciples. Thus you must follow Jesus Christ, undismayed by difficulties. Is it just that you should enjoy without cost that which he has purchased at so dear a price? He has been wearied in seeking you, permit not his pains to be profitless He walks before you at a giant's pace—unless you follow speedily he will be lost to view. In a word, you must follow with unreserved devotedness Renounce yourself in such a manner, that all your faculties and senses may be employed in his service, all your passions and inclinations sacrificed to his will. The "Pharisees," beholding the ardour with which the people thronged around the Son of God, "said among themselves: Do you see that we prevail nothing? behold the whole world is gone after him." (*John*, xii. 19.) Happy reproach to a soul that loves Jesus! Beware of imitating the perfidy of this people; follow Jesus with such fidelity, that the world, the flesh, and all the powers of darkness may be constrained to acknowledge—"we prevail nothing."

3rd Point. Consider—the joy with which pure souls in the heavenly city "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." (*Apoc.* xiv. 4.) If the beauty of his sacred humanity, while yet in a mortal state, attracted the hearts of all, with what delight shall the vision of its ineffable glory replenish the just during eternity. If, while exposed to the fury of his persecutors, the Son of God said to his apostles, "Blessed are the eyes that see the things which you see"—(*Luke*, x. 23,) what shall it be to behold him on the throne of his majesty, adored by angels as their sovereign Lord. "Blessed are they

that dwell in thy house, O Lord, they shall praise thee for ever and ever." (*Ps.* lxxxiii. 2, 3, 5.)

FRIDAY.

On Jesus instructing the People, and healing the Sick.

1st Point. Consider—"And Jesus going out saw a great multitude, and he had compassion on them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd, and he began to teach them many things." (*Mark*, vi. 34.) The Son of God, consumed with zeal, quits the repose he had sought in the desert, to instruct the people. What salutary lessons has he not also imparted to you, either directly from himself, or through those whom he has appointed to teach and guide you. What fruit have these graces produced in your soul? "He spoke to them of the kingdom of God." (*Luke*, ix. 11.) Do you mingle piety with your ordinary conversations? The kingdom of God, his laws, his providence, the happiness of the subjects of the heavenly King, should be the continual entertainment of your thoughts, the frequent subject of your discourse. How often would Jesus Christ speak to your heart did he find it duly disposed. To the interior man he discloses the secrets of his threefold kingdom; that of his glory in heaven, that of his love and grace in the hearts of the just, that of his sufferings on the cross; happy the disciple that practises the lessons of this divine Master.

2nd Point. Consider—"Which, when the people knew, they followed him, and he received them, and spoke to them of the kingdom of God, and healed them who had need of healing." (*Luke*, ix. 11.) These words, in a moral sense, signify that he restored health to all to whom it was expedient for his service and their salvation. These are maladies that *are not to death but for*

the glory of God, as that of Lazarus; or to show f rth *the virtue of Jesus Christ* in his servants, as that of St. Paul. In vain do those who are thus afflicted pray to be delivered; they shall receive the same answer as did the apostle: "My grace is sufficient for thee." (2 *Cor.* xii. 9.) They should, by perfect conformity to the divine will, find a healing in their pains, repose in suffering, glory in abjection, and health in sanctity; saying with tender confidence: "Gladly, therefore, will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may dwell in me." (2 *Cor.* xii. 9.)

3rd Point. Consider—"And he had compassion on them." (*Mark*, vi. 34.) The spiritual maladies of this people were the chief object of our Saviour's compassion. Darkness of the understanding and malice of heart, were the mortal evils which demanded a sovereign remedy. Obdurate sinners experience a depraved gratification in the commission of crime; the servants of God, on the contrary, hold in horror the least offence against his sovereign majesty. The Son of God permits that the just fall into certain faults, which they find difficult to correct, because from such defects they draw continual occasions of humiliation, by the confusion they feel at their weakness; occasions of merit, by the violence with which they crucify nature in resisting its propensities; and occasions of recompense, by the glorious victories they gain in these generously sustained combats. If he leave them for a time to struggle against natural frailty, he fortifies them with a special grace whereby they repair their faults, arise from their falls, and triumph over themselves on innumerable oc casions.

Lord, what is man, that thou shouldst watch over him with such tender care? His life, like a fleeting vapour, appears and vanishes. But thou art his strength and his refuge. To thee I turn with filial confidence, for thy virtue will sustain me in combating my enemies.

SATURDAY.

On Jesus multiplying Bread in the Desert.

1st Point. Consider—"And when the day was now far spent, his disciples came to him, saying: This is a desert place, and the hour is now past." (*Mark*, vi. 35.) The providence of God watches with especial care over those who love him and obey his voice. "Behold the eyes of the Lord are on them that fear him, and on them that hope in his mercy. To deliver their souls from death, and feed them in famine." (*Ps.* xxxii. 18, 19.) He even employs extraordinary and miraculous means for their assistance, as he did for the multitude that had followed him so fervently. He drew them designedly into a desert place, and awaited an advanced hour, to manifest more wonderfully his power and goodness. Make him the centre of your confidence, and though he delays his succour, even to extremity, say with the prophet: "Our soul waiteth for the Lord, for he is our helper and protector. For in him our heart shall rejoice, and in his holy name we have trusted. Let thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us, as we have hoped in thee." (*Ps.* xxxii. 20, *et seq.*)

2nd Point. Consider—"Send them away, that going into the next villages and towns, they may buy themselves meat to eat." (*Mark*, vi. 36.) What would it be if our fate were in the hands of men, and if our life depended solely on their care and succour? Had the Son of God been as prompt in dismissing this hungry multitude, as the apostles were in demanding it, many would have fainted in the way.

Lord, send me not to creatures, for thou art my refuge, who art rich and givest all for nothing, and it is to thee I address myself, who knowest my poverty. Keep me with thee, and send me not to men, for the whole earth without thee is a desert, and it is already

late, and the day is declining. There remains to me but a short space of life, do not abandon me in the end.

3rd Point. Consider—"But Jesus said to them: They have no need to go: give you them to eat." (*Matt.* xiv. 16.) Should the poor depart from an infinite treasure, the patient from the all-healing physician, the weak from the omnipotent, or the Christian from Jesus Christ, on whom he is absolutely dependent? The spirit of man is selfish and ungenerous, seeking to impose on others whatever is burdensome or inconvenient. The spirit of Jesus, on the contrary, is tender and compassionate; he assumes, through an infinite goodness, all our miseries, and would have his disciples imitate his charity. "Give you them to eat. And they said to him: Let us go and buy bread for two hundred pence, and we will give them to eat." (*Mark*, vi. 37.) They declare their readiness to obey, but their poverty cannot provide nourishment sufficient for five thousand men. This avowal of their indigence was all the Saviour required, because he willingly employs the ministry of the humble, who attribute nothing to themselves, but render faithfully to him his own honour and glory.

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

On the Miracle of the Loaves.

1st Point Consider—"When Jesus therefore had lifted up his eyes, and seen that a very great multitude cometh to him, he said to Philip: Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat?" (*John*, vi. 5) Jesus, from the mountain's summit, casts a look of paternal tenderness on the surrounding multitude to which numbers were continually added. In like manner, from the throne of heavenly glory, does the eye of his mercy be-

hold all creatures. The watchful providence of the Father of the universal family beholds and provides for every want, not only of man, but even of the beasts of the earth and the fowls of the air. Doubt not that his paternal love is ever mindful of your eternal interest: but alas! how forgetful are you of his presence, how heartless and indifferent in all that regards his service!

2nd Point. Consider—"He said to Philip: Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat?" Jesus in putting this question would prove the faith, confidence, and charity of his disciple, and manifest the tender solicitude with which he watches over his creatures. He is sensibly affected by the distress of this people: at the sight of their indigence and hunger his bowels of mercy yearn. Admire the charity of that heart of whose infinite goodness you have so specially partaken. Meditate these three maxims, which should regulate the sequel of your life. Jesus has care of me. What a subject of confidence, love, and joy! Jesus expects a proof of my fidelity. I must shew that I love him by obedience to his laws. Jesus requires that I guard my exterior, and co-operate with him in the care of my salvation. What he demands is little; what he gives is priceless; nevertheless, what he gives depends on the fidelity with which I give that little which he demands.

3rd Point. Consider—"Philip answered him: Two hundred penny-worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one may take a little." (*John*, vi. 7.) How true that all created goods suffice not to satisfy one soul, whereas, on the contrary, the possession of the one increated good shall suffice to replenish all hearts, and cause them for ever to repeat: *My God and my all.*

Lord, if thou askest wherewith I shall purchase bread for the nourishment of my own soul, and those thou hast confided to my care, I will say with an humble confidence, that it is in the treasure of thy providence, which is the inexhaustible source of my riches. Thou

art the only object of my desires. "I shall be satisfied when thy glory shall appear." (*Ps.* xvi. 15.)

MONDAY.

On the Miracle of the Loaves. (*Continued.*)

1st Point. Consider—"One of his disciples, Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, saith to him: There is a boy here that hath five barley loaves, and two fishes, but what are these among so many?" (*John*, vi. 8, 9.) The Son of God had chosen the disciples as the ministers of his Providence, and therefore would have them supply the matter on which he intended to exercise his sovereign power. He instructs you by this dispensation, that although he needs not your services, nevertheless he designs that you contribute something on your own part, in order to receive his benefits, and by co-operating with fidelity in general and ordinary occurrences, that you render yourself worthy of extraordinary interpositions of almighty power, when it shall please the Sovereign Lord to exercise such, either in your or by your instrumentality.

2nd Point. Consider—"And he commanded them that they should make them all sit down by companies upon the green grass. And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds and by fifties." (*Mark*, vi. 39, 40.) The spirit of Jesus is a spirit of order, he cannot endure confusion. Do you desire to partake in the distribution of his graces? Faithfully preserve in all your duties the order prescribed by those through whom he governs you. When the charity of Christ shall reign in your heart, that royal virtue will establish therein perfect order, and the due subordination of all your faculties and powers, ranging the senses under the guidance of the

spirit, the passions under reason, and nature under grace, to be regulated and directed in all things.

3rd Point. Consider—"And when he had taken the five loaves and the two fishes: looking up to heaven he blessed, and broke the loaves, and gave to his disciples to set before them: and the two fishes he divided among them all. And they all did eat, and had their fill" (*Mark*, vi. 41, 42.) In this miraculous multiplication of bread is exhibited the omnipotence of the Son of God, and his paternal providence over the multitude. But for you and for all creatures are daily exercised a still more admirable power and goodness; for is it not a much greater prodigy to feed all mankind during so many generations, than to furnish a repast to five thousand persons? How stupendous the miracle wrought each day at the table of the Lord for the nourishment of souls, in the multiplication of his precious body and blood! "And when they were filled, he said to his disciples: Gather up the fragments that remain, lest they be lost." (*John*, vi. 12.) With what vigilant zeal should you *gather up* in your heart, every circumstance of his benefits and miraculous works, that the faithful remembrance, and frequent consideration of his goodness, may augment continually his love in your heart!

TUESDAY.

On Jesus fleeing after the Miracle

1st Point. Consider—"Now those men, when they had seen what a miracle Jesus had done, said: This is of a truth the prophet that is to come into the world." (*John*, vi. 14.) Such should also be the disposition of the devout soul after partaking of the eucharistic banquet, wherein she tastes the delights of heaven, is endued with spiritual strength, and replenished with con-

solation and joy. Are these your sentiments when Jesus Christ vouchsafes to nourish you with the adorable "Bread that cometh down from heaven." (*John*, vi. 50.) Do you choose him as king, that he may govern you with absolute sway? He possesses an indisputable title to the dominion of your heart as Creator and Redeemer; do you give him such by your free election? All your powers and affections should, with common consent, exclaim: *We desire that Jesus reign over us.* The divine Saviour, who fled from the temporal royalty with which this people desired to invest him, will never refuse to reign in souls that desire to live under his empire. Make him, therefore, king of your heart; beseech him to reign therein, sovereignly by the excellence of his divine person, universally by the extent of his dominion, and eternally by the perpetuity of *his kingdom, which shall have no end.*

2nd Point. Consider—"And forthwith Jesus obliged his disciples to go up into the boat, and to go before him over the water till he dismissed the people." (*Matt.* xiv. 22.) It is with regret the disciples separate from their beloved master, but he obliges them to depart promptly, because he knew their weakness, and the ideas they entertained of the temporal glory of the Messiah, of which he would gradually disabuse them, abstracting their minds from vain, terrestrial honours. St. Jerome observes, that in this our Lord displayed his wisdom and foresight, though to the apostles, whose tender affection could not endure even a momentary privation of his divine presence, it was a species of violence. How cold is your love if you are insensible to the absence of Jesus Christ, whom you banish by inconstancy and infidelity. If obedience require you to forego his sweet conversation in prayer and retirement, you may embark with the apostles without danger; your submission will be your safeguard; but you should never quit his internal presence without fear and

sorrow. Who would not fear in the absence of Jesus to encounter the wild tempests of the deep. Who, but the cold of heart, could be insensible to a separation so painful?

3rd Point. Consider—"And having dismissed the multitude, he went up into a mountain alone to pray. And when it was evening he was there alone." (*Matt.* xiv. 23.) The Son of God employs his all-persuasive words to change the minds of the people who would make him king; but when the cross is presented, he embraces it with generous devotedness. "Because for thy sake I have borne reproach; shame hath covered my face." (*Ps.* lxviii. 8.) You, on the contrary, fly the contempt you merit, and seek honour of which you are undeserving. Henceforth, imitate this adorable model; renounce human praise, seek retreat and silence, and when you have succeeded in what might occasion vain glory, have recourse to prayer, and sink into the depth of your own nothingness in the presence of him, to whom alone belongs the glory of that which his grace enables you to accomplish. Permit not pride to inflate your heart, lest it cast you into the precipice. "Let not the foot of pride come to me, and let not the hand of the sinner move me. There the workers of iniquity are fallen, they are cast out and could not stand." (*Ps.* xxxv. 12, 13.)

WEDNESDAY.

On Jesus walking on the Waters.

1st Point. Consider—"And when it was late, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and himself alone on the land." (*Mark*, vi 47.) Jesus Christ may be said to be "alone" in a threefold sense. He is alone by his essential greatness. He is alone in dignity as Son of

God; in office, as universal Saviour; in merit, as author of grace; and alone in suffering without measure or consolation. He is alone in the hearts of the just, because they live and act for him alone; he is the object of their thoughts, affections, and desires. This solitude is alike agreeable to Jesus Christ, and advantageous to the soul. How should you desire to hear him whisper: "I will lead her into the wilderness, and I will speak to her heart." (*Osee*, ii. 14.) In fine, he is alone in the hearts of the imperfect, by their forgetfulness of his presence and benefits, their inattention to his honour and service. The absence of a spirit of faith deprives them of the consolation his intimate presence imparts.

2nd Point. Consider—"But the boat in the midst of the sea was tossed with the waves, for the wind was contrary." (*Matt.* xiv. 24.) When Jesus is absent the wind is contrary, and the soul is agitated by the waves. She is subject to the inconstancy of the world, which is a stormy sea, where all is fleeting and perishable: "For the fashion of this world passeth away." (1 *Cor.* vii. 31.) Again, she is subject to the inconstancy of her own will, which, not being attached to the sovereign good, expands in a thousand vain desires, that like wave succeeding wave, dash her unceasingly from one object to another. The essential and universal good alone can fill the void, and satisfy the insatiable hunger that devours her. She is also subject to the inconstancy of men, whose minds are variable as the wind. They are sometimes for, sometimes against; an alternate yes and no, affirming and denying in a breath. Jesus is alone unchangeable, as St. Paul says, and without shadow of alteration He is ever faithful amidst the inconstancy of creatures.

3rd Point. Consider—"And seeing them labouring in rowing (for the wind was against them), and about the fourth watch of the night he cometh to them walking upon the sea, and he would have passed by them

but they seeing him walking upon the sea, thought it was an apparition, and they cried out." (*Mark*, vi 48, 49.) The surprise and terror of the apostles at the approach of their Divine Master, are accounted for by the evangelist in these words: "For they understood not concerning the loaves. for their heart was blinded." (*Mark*, vi. 52.) Had they recognised the Son of God, and reflected on the many miraculous works they saw him operate, his walking on the waters would not have astonished, nor his presence caused them to be troubled, since he was the God of peace and the author of the human heart, which would have felt the liveliest emotions of joy and love at his approach, if the absence of faith had not excited agitation and deadened the influence of love. How important is a lively faith! If not guided by its light you walk in darkness, that will betray you into error and illusions. Pride will represent your passions as virtues, natural impetuosity as zeal, and all the chimeras of your imagination as the impressions of the spirit of God. "May God have mercy on us, and bless us; may he cause the light of his countenance to shine upon us, and may he have mercy on us. That we may know thy way upon earth, thy salvation in all nations." (*Ps.* lxvi. 2, 3.)

THURSDAY.

On St. Peter walking on the Waters.

1st Point. Consider—"And immediately he spoke with him, and said to them: Have a good heart, it is I, fear ye not." (*Mark*, vi. 50.) This sentence, "It is I," uttered by Incarnate Wisdom, signifies sovereignty, immensity, eternity, and the plenitude of the Divine Being! The extent of its operation is immense, for it infuses every blessing into the hearts of the just: it

consoles and fortifies the soul amidst darkness and tempests. Did you reflect who it is that says: "It is I," your terror would be changed into confidence. He has walked upon the waters of tribulation to afford succour to your misery, and encourage you to approach him by the same path without apprehending danger, because he is Omnipotent to perform even miracles in your favour, and not less so to operate still greater prodigies in his infinite goodness.

2nd Point. Consider—"And Peter making answer, said: Lord, if it be thou, bid me come to thee upon the waters." (*Matt.* xiv. 28.) Reflect on the effects which the word of Jesus produces in the heart of the disciple. It enlightens his mind, impressing him with an exalted idea of the divinity of his Master. It gains his will, discovering to him the sovereign empire of Jesus Christ over the liberty of man. "Bid me come to thee;" without thy command I dare undertake nothing; my strength is in obedience. Finally, it inspires a courage that fears no peril; for perfect charity is ready to brave the fury of the elements, that is, afflictions and persecutions. The saints study faithfully to imitate in all things the Son of God. As he has come upon the waters, that is the way of the cross, animated by his example, they generously consecrate themselves to the same, not measuring their desires by natural fragility but by the power of grace which is omnipotent. For though charity is fervent, it is neither rash nor precipitate: it undertakes nothing but at the command of Jesus Christ, whose direction it awaits before casting itself into the sea.

3rd Point. Consider—"And he said: Come." (*Matt.* xiv. 29.) There is no desire more fully accomplished than that of the cross, no offering more acceptable than that of a soul prepared to embrace the sorrows and opprobrium of Calvary. St. Peter had no sooner said: "Bid me come to thee upon the waters" than his

Lord replies: Come, and Peter going down out of the boat, walked upon the water to come to Jesus. But seeing the wind strong, he was afraid." (*Matt.* xiv. 29. This diffidence is an impediment to his miraculous walking upon the waters, for when he feared "he began to sink." (*Matt.* xiv. 30.) A fault that seems but trivial, frequently interrupts the course of divine grace, and retards the progress of a soul in the path of perfection. But the faith and confidence of the apostle, instantly rekindling, "he cried out, saying: Lord, save me." (*Ibid.*) Meditate the influence of humble prayer over the heart of Jesus. "And immediately Jesus stretching forth his hand, took hold of him, and said to him: O thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt? And when they were come up into the boat, the wind ceased, and they that were in the boat came and adored him, saying: Indeed thou art the Son of God." (*Matt.* xiv. 31, 32, 33.) If you persevere in his love, you shall offer him the same homage in his heavenly kingdom, where you will adore him as your God, praise him as your Redeemer, and give him thanks as your sovereign Benefactor.

FRIDAY.

On the same subject (Continued.)

1st Point. Consider—"O thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt?" (*Matt.* xiv. 31.) In St. Peter you behold a portrait of the power of grace, and the weakness of nature. First, you see him, a man of courage, cast himself fearlessly into the sea at the sound of his Master's voice. Take him as your model, raise yourself above your passions, senses, and inordinate affections, generously surmounting every obstacle to your union with Jesus Christ. Renounce sin to follow the attraction of grace. Banish terrestrial thoughts to receive the

lights of heaven. Cast off the burden of evil custom, to embrace the yoke of the Lord, and sustain with him the weight of the cross. Strip yourself of the old man, that God may clothe you with his strength. Hasten, in fine, so to pass over things temporal, as to be united to God in time and eternity. Again you behold St. Peter trembling at the sight of danger; as his confidence is weakened, the miraculous solidity of the waves fails; and when his faith diminishes, "he began to sink;" such is your deplorable weakness when unaided by the grace of God—for man is nothingness.

2nd Point. Consider—the world as a sea agitated by a furious tempest. Do you love God? You will walk upon the waters, treading under foot the fear of the world. Do you love the world? You will be overwhelmed by the waves. Distrust the smiles of the world—the wind of vanity is not less to be feared than that of pusillanimity. It is an heroic act of virtue to combat prosperity—it is a singular happiness to conquer in the struggle.

3rd Point. Consider—these words of David, "And thou hast given me the protection of thy salvation, and thy right hand hath held me up." (*Ps.* xvii. 36.) Attach yourself to Jesus Christ by faith, confidence, love, and resignation, and his omnipotence will sustain you. You will find a firm support in his power, that succours your weakness; in his wisdom, that beholds the extent of your sufferings; his goodness that loves you, and will draw advantage from your evils; finally, in his fidelity and liberality which always exceed his promises. He extends to the aid of his apostle the same hand that had formed the heavens, and which shall be stretched forth on the cross to save the world from perishing eternally. Supported by that hand St. Peter walks upon the waters and is delivered from danger. In fine, that hand appeases the tempest, and brings the bark in safety to the port. Union with Jesus Christ will also enable you to

perform miracles of virtue, to surmount the waves of passion, temptation, and persecution, and arrive happily with him in the haven of eternal salvation.

SATURDAY.

On Jesus coming into the land of Genezareth.

1st Point. Consider—"And when they had passed over they came into the land of Genezareth, and set to the shore." (*Mark*, vi 53.) What was the joy of the apostles in beholding themselves delivered from the darkness of the night and danger of the tempest, but still infinitely more in enjoying the society of their beloved master. Imagine from this the happiness of a soul on quitting the obscurity of this life, or the flames of purgatory, to enter the land of the living, where "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes: and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more, for the former things are passed away." (*Apoc.* xxi. 4.)

O my soul when shalt thou be delivered from the obscurity and tempest of this life; when shalt thou go forth from this miserable world? "When shall I come and appear before the face of God?" (*Ps.* xli. 3.)

2nd Point. Consider—"And when the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent into all that country, and brought to him all that were diseased. And they besought him that they might touch but the hem of his garment. And as many as touched were made whole." (*Matt.* xiv. 35, 36.) Contemplate this charitable physician, walking through the streets of the towns, amidst the sick and infirm; dispensing health even by the touch of his garments. What will he not do for you, if with humility you implore what is necessary for your perfection? Did you reflect with what

incomparable goodness he presents you, not his garment, but his sacred body, not only by touch, but to receive into your heart in the eucharistic mystery, the source of life, you would not approach it so seldom or with such tepidity. "For as often as thou repeatest this mystery, and receivest the body of Christ, so often dost thou celebrate the work of thy redemption, and art made partaker of all the merits of Christ." (*Imit.* b iv. c 2.)

3rd Point. Consider—"And running through the whole country, they began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard he was." (*Mark*, vi 51.) The Incarnate Word passes from one labour to another without allowing himself any repose. From the commencement of the preceding day he was occupied instructing the people, healing the sick, and feeding the multitude. Afterwards he passed three watches of the night in prayer, at the fourth he came to the succour of his apostles. At the dawn of day, descending from the bark, he recommenced his labours, employing the entire day in works of charity. Thus he spent the days and nights of his mortal life. He began the morning by prayer—acts of humility and charity succeeded. Prayer and the cross marked all his moments—in all he was consumed by the fire of charity. He gave but a small portion of the night to rest, and this he took sometimes on a mountain, sometimes in a bark, during the three years of his public life. Reflect on the use you make of time, which the goodness of God has given you to purchase eternity; its loss is irreparable; yet you spend the days and years of your life in idleness, whilst your Saviour labours unremittingly for your salvation.

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

On Jesus addressing the People on the subject of the Blessed Sacrament.

1st Point. Consider—"Amen, amen, I say to you, you seek me, not because you have seen miracles, but because you did eat of the loaves and were filled." (*John*, vi. 26.) God beholds with an eye of indignation those who seek him from motives of temporal interest or any other sinister intention; you must seek God for his own sake; what gift could he confer comparable to himself? You are indefatigable in labouring for this perishable life; why do you not seek that which is heavenly and everlasting? If we are born to seek, says St. Clement of Alexandria, let us employ this natural inclination in the research of eternal truths, not of sensual gratifications.

2nd Point. Consider—"Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto life everlasting, which the Son of man will give you." (*John*, vi. 26.) He says not simply, take this divine nourishment that sustains your supernatural life, but labour for it; cultivate assiduously the soil of your heart,—the hand of God has prepared, do you dispose your soul to receive this seed of eternal life. The Holy Ghost has vouchsafed to form the immaculate body which a union with the Divinity has endowed with infinite excellence; he has conducted it by the ordeal of the cross, in order to merit the graces, which, veiled under the sacramental species, it communicates to your soul; wherefore, you must labour on your side to prepare yourself by the sanctification of soul and body for the reception of so ineffable a gift.

3rd Point. Consider—"For him hath God the Father sealed." (*John*, vi. 27.) Meditate the importance of this motive, which should impel you to exert every

faculty for receiving worthily this bread of life. My Father, he says, has engraved on my person the character of the Divinity, by an eternal generation. He has impressed the same seal on my humanity, to form thereon, by the hypostatic union and infusion of all graces, a lively portrait of his perfections, and all the attributes of his glory. I also promise to unite and incorporate myself with you in the holy communion, in order to seal you with the same seal of my divinity and humanity. Spare no effort then to prepare your soul and body for receiving this divine character, that you may become, by the impression of my grace, an excellent portrait of my virtues.

MONDAY.

On Jesus replying to the Jews regarding the Blessed Sacrament.

1st Point. Consider—"They said therefore unto him: What shall we do that we may work the works of God?" (*John*, vi. 28.) This is a question of the utmost importance. St. Paul, in the sincerity of his heart, proposed the same in the first moment of his conversion—"Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (*Acts*, ix. 6.) You should frequently put to your own soul the same question—what shall I do to accomplish the will of God? You have been created by the almighty hand of God, to perform the works of God; your great solicitude, therefore, should be to learn what those works are, in order perfectly to execute them.

2nd Point. Consider—"Jesus answered, and said to them: This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he hath sent." (*John*, vi. 29.) All good works are the works of God; they proceed from and return to him; his grace is their principle, his glory their end.

But amongst all the works of God which we should exercise in approaching the holy communion, the first is faith, the basis and foundation of all other virtues. The adorable sacrament is a mystery of faith, infinitely elevated above the senses; it is by faith that Jesus Christ dwells in us. Heretofore the manna was preserved in a vessel of gold; this, says St. Cyril, was the type of a pious soul, who having received the faith of Jesus Christ, encloses within her bosom this inestimable treasure.

3rd Point. Consider—"Jesus answered, and said to them: This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he hath sent." Faith is, by excellence, the work of God; its necessity is absolute; without it there is no possibility of approaching the Deity. Its merit is excelling, it being a sacrifice of the understanding, the noblest faculty of man. Its utility is incomparable; it is the light of faith that converts sinners, and causes the just to increase in all virtues; it replenishes them with his sacred body and blood, united to his divinity, in the holy communion. What the light of glory is to the angels, the light of faith is to devout souls. At the heavenly feast God dispenses his benefits—the angels render homage. The angels praise God, and God replenishes them with the delights of his divinity and humanity. At the eucharistic table the same is extended to the pious soul by means of a lively faith. Such is the work of God which you should perform, in order to dispose your soul for receiving the heavenly bread that nourishes to immortality.

TUESDAY.

On Jesus replying to the second question of the Jews.

1st Point. Consider—"And they said therefore to him: What sign, therefore, dost thou show that we may see, and may believe thee? What dost thou work?" (*John*, vi. 30.) How amazing the blindness of the Jews, how heinous their ingratitude. The miracle by which Moses fed their fathers in the desert, seems to them an irrefragable proof of his divine mission; yet they are unmindful and ungrateful for the innumerable miraculous benefits conferred by the Saviour of the world, and ask with disdainful irony,—"What dost thou work?" Ah! what work has he not done? Number the sick he has healed, the demoniacs he has delivered, the dead he has raised. But self-love is insatiable in its desires; it is never content; the more you give, the more it demands; and thanklessly forgetful of favours received, presumptuously demands new benefits.

2nd Point. Consider—"Then Jesus said to them: Amen, amen, I say to you, Moses gave you not bread from heaven, but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life to the world." (*John*, vi. 32, 33.) Admire the meekness and benignity of the Son of God towards these ungrateful men. He evinces no indignation at their contempt of the miracle of the loaves; on the contrary, he thence takes occasion to instruct them on the mystery of the blessed sacrament, disclosing its infinite excellencies, of which the manna was but a feeble type. For the divine body received in the eucharistic bread, is formed, by the operation of the Holy Ghost, of the purest blood of a virgin immaculate as the heavens! This heavenly bread is not only incorruptible, but the source of incorruptibility; it is communicated to all, yet remains unconsumed.

This bread of life preserves the soul from the death of sin, and confers on soul and body a blessed immortality! How lamentable the condition of a Christian that loathes this heavenly nourishment! Yet how many deprive themselves for years of its vivifying support, insensible of the spiritual misery whereunto they are reduced.

3rd Point. Consider—"They said, therefore, unto him: Lord, give us always this bread." (*John*, vi. 34.) With good reason do they implore that he *give them always this bread*, for it is always necessary! Did they really understand what they petition for, how praiseworthy their desire. What should be your confusion, though instructed in this mystery of ineffable love, who are so cold in desiring, so insensible to the privation of such an infinite benefit? Woe to him that is excluded from the nuptial feast of the Lamb. (*Apoc.* xxi. 9.) But alas! in this divine mystery is accomplished the prediction of Jeremiah—"The ways of Sion mourn, because there are none that come to the solemn feast." (*Lam.* i. 4.)

WEDNESDAY.

On Jesus replying to the Jews. (*Continued.*)

1st Point. Consider—"And Jesus said to them: I am the bread of life, he that cometh to me shall not hunger, and he that believeth in me, shall never thirst." (*John*, vi. 35.) Thus Jesus responds to the prayer of the Jews: that he would *give them always that bread*, by discovering to them many admirable secrets: "I am the bread of life, he that cometh to me shall not hunger; and he that believeth in me shall never thirst." To live in uninterrupted happiness and content, you must leave yourself and go to Jesus. You approach him by the steps of faith and love. Out of him you will find only death. For he is the bread of life, its source and prin-

ciple. "Lord." says St. Augustin, "the source of life is in thee and not in us. Wherefore we must enter into thee that we may find life; for if we seek our sanctification in ourselves, we shall die. Were we satisfied with our own goods, we should languish in dryness; let us therefore apply our lips to the fountain of water springing up to eternal life."

2nd Point. Consider—"All that my Father giveth me, shall come to me; and him that cometh to me, I will not cast out. But I said unto you, that you also have seen me, and you believe not." (*John*, vi. 37, 36.) Therefore you are not of the number of the predestinate, because you believe not in me. You approach me not by faith. You desire not to be numbered with my flock, or to obey my voice. Such is the cause of your eternal ruin; for my father has placed all things in my hands, and all those he has given "shall come to me." Go then with confidence to Jesus Christ; he receives most graciously all those who follow with fidelity the invitations of his grace. Fear not, for the Father has placed all his treasures in the hands of his Son. The fund of faith is inexhaustible. Whilst it gives all, it still possesses all, because it loses not that which it bestows. Beseech the Father that he would vouchsafe to give you to his Son. Implore the Son to draw you by his grace and receive you into his fold, that you may be nourished with his body and blood.

3rd Point. Consider—"I came down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me. Now this is the will of the Father who sent me: that of all that he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again in the last day." (*John*, vi. 38, 39.) Meditate the obedience which the Son of God renders to the will of his Father in all things, and also the esteem in which the eternal Father holds your soul, for the redemption of which he sent his well beloved Son, to whom he recommended it with an infinite tenderness.

Give thanks to the Father and the Son for this transcendant mercy, and dispose yourself for a holy and frequent reception of *the living bread that cometh down from heaven*. Thus shall you become worthy of the love and of the vision of Jesus Christ, wherein consists the life of your soul.

THURSDAY.

On Jesus replying to the murmurs of the Jews.

1st Point. Consider—"The Jews, therefore, murmured at him, because he had said: I am the living bread which came down from heaven." (*John*, vi. 41.) In the Jews, the vice of murmuring descends as an inheritance from their fathers, observes St. Cyril. The fathers, through an extreme ingratitude, murmured in the desert against God, and the children murmur against Jesus Christ by an inexcusable disobedience and incredulity, despising their Saviour. Instead of venerating the sanctity of his life, the sublimity of his doctrine, and the lustre of his miracles, they contemn his poverty and humility. Worldlings are accustomed to respect only riches, and the perishable greatness of the world; where these are wanting, virtue is without honour. Shun such injustice, and meditate the words of St. James: "Hearken, my dearest brethren, hath not God chosen the poor in this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which God hath promised to them that love him?" (*James*, ii. 5.)

2nd Point. Consider—"And Jesus therefore said to them: Murmur not among yourselves. No man can come to me, except the Father, who hath sent me, draw him." (*John*, vi. 43, 44.) If you believe me not, it is because malice and ingratitude have blinded your understandings, and opposed obstacles to the attracting

grace of my Father, without which no man can come to me. Those divine attractions of the heavenly Father consist in an abundant effusion of his lights, which discover truths important for eternal salvation; and in a tender violence, by which his divine perfections solicit and gain, without constraining, the will. If the gratifications of sense can incline the heart of man without infringing on his liberty, with much more reason do spiritual delights, of which God is the object, possess that power. Wherefore pray with the spouse: "Draw me: we will run after thee to the odour of thy ointments." (*Cant.* i. 3.)

3rd POINT. Consider—"It is written in the prophets: *And they shall all be taught of God.* Everyone that hath heard of the Father, and hath learned, cometh to me. Not that any man hath seen the Father, but he who is of God, he hath seen the Father." (*John*, vi. 45, 46.) Beseech God, as did King Solomon, to give you a docile heart: "Give therefore to thy servant an understanding heart." (3 *Kings*, iii. 9.) For the spirit of God takes pleasure in communicating himself to simple and docile souls, whom he draws by his sweet and efficacious grace, whilst he is repelled by the self-opinionated man. This amiable docility is particularly necessary for entering into the mystery of the most holy Sacrament, and penetrating its divine secrets, which infinitely surpass all the reasoning of the human intellect. If, says St. Ireneus, you are the work of God, let your heart be pliable to the hand that has formed it, and retain the figure he has impressed thereon. Nourish carefully this docile disposition, then will divine goodness cover all that is terrestrial, whether in your interior or exterior, with the purest gold of charity, rendering you so perfect that the *King will desire thy beauty.*

FRIDAY.

On Jesus promising to give his Body and Blood in the Blessed Eucharist.

1st Point. Consider—"The bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world." (*John*, vi. 52.) Meditate the excellence of the gift which the Son of God promises to bestow. It is his own sacred body, inseparably united to his soul and divinity. The exterior appearance under which this ineffable gift is given, is not less admirable. The Incarnate Word gives himself, as spiritual nourishment, uniting himself to you in a manner the most intimate, amiable, and tender, so that if the gift is marvellous, the mode of its communication is not less so. The circumstances that accompany this gift of unspeakable bounty, enhance exceedingly the munificent liberality of the Son of God. For he dispenses it over the entire world; he gives it to each in particular, not only once but an infinity of times; so that with reason he calls himself *our daily bread.* In fine, he has perpetuated this miracle for more than eighteen hundred years, and will continue to do so even to the consummation of ages.

2nd Point. Consider—"If any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever." (*John*, vi. 52.) The end for which the Son of God confers this inestimable gift renders it still more precious. It is to infuse into your soul an eminent degree of sanctity, to form and cement between God and you a most strict and intimate union, and to conduct you to a crown of immense and interminable glory. The vileness of the creature on whom it is bestowed, should also augment the esteem of this divine gift. He communicates himself to ungrateful and perfidious man, who had been the enemy of his God. To conclude, he gives it for the life of that world which is to nail him to the cross. Thanks be to thee, O

good Jesus, our eternal Shepherd, who hast vouchsafed to feed us poor exiles with thy precious body and blood, and to invite us to the receiving these mysteries with the words of thy own mouth, saying, "Come to me all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you." (*Matt.* xi. 28.)

3rd Point. Consider—"He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me, and I in him." (*John*, vi. 57.) Reflect on the admirable fruits produced in this adorable sacrament in the soul that receives it worthily; it imparts a divine life, by which the devout receiver lives in Jesus Christ, through the influence of whose spirit he thinks, speaks, and acts. "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, the same also shall live by me." (*John*, vi. 58.) It confers at present a life of grace and love, of which this sacrament is the source, and hereafter a life of glory for soul and body. "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up in the last day." (*John*, vi. 55.) The infinite liberality of Jesus Christ not only presents you his precious body and blood, but moreover promises an infinite recompense for receiving this ineffable gift. Add to this, that consumed with the desire of communicating his benefits, he commands you to receive him under pain of eternal death.

O Victim of Charity! what seest thou in so wretched a creature, that thou wouldst desire to enter my miserable heart? When thou spokest to an angel on Mount Sina, thou didst forbid the people to approach thee under pain of death. Now that thou comest in person under the sacramental veil, thou invitest us, saying, "Come to me all." (*Matt.*)

SATURDAY.

On Jesus reprehending the Incredulity of his Disciples.

1st Point. Consider—"Many therefore of his disciples hearing it, said: This saying is hard, and who can hear it?" (*John*, vi. 61.) It was not the seventy-two disciples that murmured thus, for he had not yet chosen them; it was persons who made profession of following the Son of God, but only for a time, and coldly, according to the observations of Theophilact How pernicious to the soul is inconstancy in the service of God; to the faithless and ungrateful alone it appertains to complain, that the maxims of Jesus Christ are severe. Nothing is more sweet and amiable than the law of his Master to a Christian, who renounces his own judgment to follow the lights of faith. Ah that sinners would prove by experience the truth of these words of Jesus Christ: "My yoke is sweet and my burden light." (*Matt.* xi. 30.)

2nd Point. Consider—"But Jesus knowing in himself that his disciples murmured at this, said to them: Doth this scandalize you? If then you shall see the Son of Man ascend up where he was before." (*John*, vi. 62, 63.) Then without doubt you will believe that he can give you his body for your spiritual nourishment, and can sustain the life of your soul, without being himself consumed, since in him resides the power of ascending into heaven. St. Augustin, speaking in the person of our Lord, says: You imagine that I will give you my body in a gross and carnal manner, but if you shall see the Son of Man ascend to the throne of his glory, whence he descended on earth, then you will renounce those terrestrial ideas; for he who can ascend to heaven living and immortal, cannot be consumed though he give his body for the food of man. Those disciples who faltered in his service were unworthy of beholding the Son of God ascend into heaven, whither he went to prepare crowns for those who persevere to the end. Bu.

at the day of final retribution they shall see him descend as their judge. Day of terror for the enemies of Jesus Christ! Day of triumph for his faithful servants!

3rd Point. Consider—"It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing." (*John*, vi. 64.) That is, says St. Augustin, when separated from the spirit and divinity of Jesus Christ. But united to that spirit it profiteth much. "The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life." (*John*, vi. 64.) That is, I will give you my body and blood under the species of bread and wine, in a state all spiritual, glorious, and heavenly. *My words are life.* I will give you, not a lifeless body, but one that derives immortal life from a union with the divinity, and communicates spiritual and eternal life to the worthy receiver. Adore the infinite wisdom and power of Jesus Christ, who, in order to sustain the life of your soul, has concealed his glorious and all-vivifying body under the lowly sacramental species, in such manner that he is whole and entire in each host, and in each part of the host, as the soul in the body it enlivens, or the spirit in the place it occupies.

O sacred flesh, it is the Spirit of God that both vivifies and renders thee vivifying.

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

On Jesus confirming the Faith of his Apostles.

1st Point. Consider—"Then Jesus said to the twelve: Will you also go away?" (*John*, vi. 68.) Jesus gives you his grace, and inspires the desire of serving him, but leaves your will at liberty to determine for itself. If you abuse the privilege of free will, it turns to your own prejudice. If you resolve on quitting him, he will not compel you to remain; he permitted the

disciples to withdraw from his service. Alas! what need has he of your services; but you depend in all things on his power and goodness. The Creator is wholly independent of the creature, its service or affection; but the creature exists by the will of the Creator alone. If through the mercy and grace of God you are saved, his beatitude cannot be augmented thereby; neither can it be diminished, if through your own fault you are lost. What, therefore, can he gain in your regard, except that in procuring your eternal happiness, he displays on a miserable sinner the excess of his clemency and goodness?

2nd Point. Consider—"And Simon Peter answered him: Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we have believed and have known that thou art the Christ the Son of God." (*John*, vi. 69, 70.) Thus St. Peter replies as head of the sacred college: observe the difference between the faithful disciples of Jesus Christ, and those who are but faintly disposed to follow him. The latter say: "This saying is hard." The one are disgusted with the bread of angels; the other find in it their delight. The tepid are repelled by that which should attract them to the divine love; the fervent are drawn even by what seems most repugnant to the feelings of nature. In a word, the former renounce the service of Jesus Christ, and are lost; the latter adhere to him, and are saved. Enter into the sentiments of St. Peter: attach yourself inseparably to the Author of your salvation. In the Incarnate Word alone is the true life to be found, elsewhere you will seek it in vain. If you leave him, death eternal, everlasting reprobation is inevitable.

3rd Point. Consider—"Jesus answered them: Have not I chosen you twelve; and one of you is a devil? Now he meant Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon: for this same was about to betray him, whereas he was one of the twelve." (*John*, vi. 71, 72.) Judas was already

perverted, he was fallen from grace. "For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that did not believe, and who he was that would betray him." (*John*, vi. 65.) Nevertheless, he retained him in his society, admitted him to his familiarity, admonished him secretly, guarded his honour, constituted him steward of the sacred college, and depository of the alms ministered to their necessities by the piety of the faithful. To fill up the measure of clemency, Jesus affords him yet an entire year for repentance.

O inconceivable mercy of my Saviour, guilty though I be, I will never diffide in thee! But blind, indeed, must I be, if I distrust not the malice of my own perfidious heart.

MONDAY.

On Jesus replying to the Pharisees.

1st Point. Consider—"There came to him from Jerusalem, Scribes and Pharisees, saying: Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the ancients? For they wash not their hands when they eat bread But he answering, said to them: Why do you also transgress the commandment of God for your tradition?" (*Matt.* xv. 1, 2, 3.) In the reply of the Son of God to the Pharisees, is discovered the first characteristic of false devotion. It is clear-sighted to the faults of others, blind to its own. Persons of superficial piety are scandalized, and murmur without cause, under pretext of zeal for religion. They reprove light offences in their brethren, and observe not more serious ones in themselves. You should rather imitate the apostles, and silently bear that men blame your actions, and murmur against you, without giving occasion for it on your part. "Son, stand firm, and trust in me; for what are words

but words? They fly through the air, but hurt not a stone. If thou art guilty, think that thou wilt willingly amend thyself. If thy conscience accuse thee not, think that thou wilt willingly suffer this for God's sake." (*Imit.* b. iii. c. 46.)

2nd Point. Consider—"For God said: *Honour thy father and mother.* And *he that shall curse father or mother, let him die the death.* But you say: Whosoever shall say to his father or mother, the gift whatsoever proceedeth from me shall profit thee. And he shall not honour his father or mother, and you have made void the commandment of God for your tradition." (*Matt.* xv. 3, *et seq.*) In these words our Lord discovers to us the second characteristic of false devotion. It seeks its private interest in the service of God, thus reversing the order of charity, which, as St. Bernard observes, commands that we esteem temporal goods only for the necessary convenience of the body; the body, for the advantage of the soul; the soul, for the service of God; but that we love God purely for his own sake. Truly, our real interest is included in the divine service, since to love God is man's supreme good; nevertheless, he is not to be loved merely through interested motives. That would be, by an extreme disorder, to mistake the means for the end, and the end for the means: to love God for the creature, and the creature for itself; consequently to love the creature more than God.

3rd Point. Consider—"Hypocrites, well hath Isaias prophesied of you, saying: *This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. And in vain do they worship me, teaching doctrines and commandments of men*" (*Matt.* xv. 7, 8, 9.) In these words Jesus Christ exposes the third characteristic of false devotion. It is satisfied with an exterior appearance of piety, whilst the heart is unfaithful in observing the law of God. It is observant of ceremonies and practices of devotion, to which self-love is attached, yet neglects what is of obli-

gation, and important for salvation. They scruple to omit any exterior mark of respect in approaching the holy table, whilst they fear not to receive the Holy of Holies into a heart stained with secret envy or aversions, or fettered by inordinate attachments they have not sincerely resolved to correct. Of such, as of the Pharisees, our Lord said: "Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up." (*Matt.* xv. 13.) O unhappy plants, that remaining sterile, shall be cut down and cast into eternal flames. Thrice awful words—"Let them alone." (*Matt.* xv. 14.)

O Lord, leave me not alone, nor permit that I leave thee. For if I abandon thee not in time, thou wilt not forsake me in eternity.

TUESDAY.

On Jesus healing the Daughter of the Cananean Woman.

1st POINT. Consider—"And behold a woman of Canaan who came out of these coasts, crying out, said to him: Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David, my daughter is grievously troubled by a devil." (*Matt.* xv. 22.) There is nothing so dear to you as your own soul; it is the very principle of your being; wherefore you should watch over it with peculiar vigilance, and defend it from all the enemies of salvation. Why do sinners make so little account of their soul?—because it is no longer their own, they have sold it to the demon, they have delivered it up to hell and death; otherwise they would fear to lose or expose it to be plundered by their enemy. The Cananean loved her daughter, because she was the child of her heart; therefore she spared no pains in seeking her cure. You love wealth, honour, or pleasure; you even cherish whatever is connected or depending on them. Why then is your

soul less dear, less precious in your estimation, since it is more intimately your own than all things besides; for from all else you must separate sooner or later.

2nd Point Consider—God has given you but one soul, in order that all your solicitude may centre in that most important object. The mind of the Cananean mother is entirely occupied with the cure of her child, because she is the only object of her love. You have but one soul, the salvation of which should be your only care. Remember, says St. Teresa, that you have but one life, one soul, one paradise. Life flows as a current, bearing on its tide all those vanities that amuse or inflate you with presumption. Paradise is eternal, and the good things thereof are immutable. Your soul is placed between time and eternity. Time is appropriated to labour, which is passing away; eternity, to the recompense, which is interminable. You have but one life to spend in this miserable world, one crown to gain in heaven, one soul to save. It follows, if you are so unfortunate as to lose that soul, your loss is irreparable, your woe eternal and without resource.

3rd Point. Consider—if you lose your soul, the loss is not only irremediable, it is also universal. All that you are, observes St. Ambrose, depends on the soul, because, abstracting from that you are nothing but the dust of which you are formed, and to which you must again return. "All the glory of the king's daughter is within." (*Ps.* xliv. 14.) If man is the noblest work of God, it is the soul that renders him precious; the body is but dust and corruption. If he is born to govern the universe, it is the soul that sways the sceptre of dominion; the body only ranks with the slaves that owe him subjection. If he is created for eternity, it is the soul that is endowed with immortality; the body is the spoil of death, the victim of the tomb. Since then all the dignity and excellence of your being is centred in the soul, should not this be also the only object of your

esteem and love? Is it just that this, so important in the eyes of God, so amiable to the angels, so terrible to the demons, should be treated by you with contemptuous indifference, and that in return for the honour it confers on you, you should dishonour it by sullying it with crime?

WEDNESDAY.

On the esteem and care Man owes to his Soul.

1st Point. Consider—the excellence of your soul, which raises it in an eminent degree above all visible creatures; their extraction is from base matter, whilst your soul derives its origin from the bosom of God—"Thy hands have made me and formed me." (*Ps.* cxviii. 73.) In order to conceive the idea of the royal prophet, observe that the dignity of a creature consists in its appertaining to God; consequently it is ennobled in proportion as it approximates to him. No other creature has the honour of bearing so intimate a relation to God as the soul of man; because, of all the works of God man alone belongs to him on a twofold title: that of creation, by which he was drawn forth from nonentity; that of redemption which re-produced him from the more vile and wretched condition of sin. Again, other creatures belong to God only by the communication of a created gift; but man, not only by a created, but also an increated one. For by the mystery of the incarnation man has been elevated to the throne of the Divinity, an honour incomparably greater than has been conferred on angels.

2nd Point. Consider—the beauty of your soul, so superior to any other of the works of God. All the exterior perfections with which its Divine Author has adorned the various portions of creation, are united in

man, who is an epitome of visible and mortal beauty; yet all that is admirable in the body results from its union with the soul, of whose beauty it is but the shadow. For the soul bears the image of the Deity, and is a living representation of the traits of its divine original. To conceive the beauty of a soul, observes St. Teresa, suffice it to know it is the image of God, who has placed it in the body as the symbol of the Divinity. According to the holy Fathers, he has displayed his sovereign beauty in man, as in a mirror of his divine attributes, to the end he might render himself visible in his image. The saints illumined by a heavenly light, have embraced the most perilous labours, and risked their lives to contribute to the salvation of a soul. Judge, hence, the love you should bear your own soul, how assiduously you should shun whatever could tarnish its beauty, which has gained the heart of the heavenly spouse, and which is consecrated to the service of its God, according to the observation of St. Ambrose.

3rd Point. Consider—in addition to the dignity and beauty of your soul, its inestimable price and value. What is the value of your soul? That which is consecrated to God is priceless. As it cannot be profaned without impiety, neither can it be sold or purchased without a crime. Your soul is consecrated to God by innumerable titles; it is his throne, his temple, his inheritance, and his treasure, in which he places his delight. Again, would you know the value of your soul? Consider at what price it has been purchased! Truly a soul must be a great treasure—a rich deposit, since Eternal Wisdom has judged it more precious than the blood of a Man-God. Look upon the cross, on which has been paid your ransom. That which has been given for the redemption of your soul is so precious, that it might be said, man is priceless as God himself. In the balance in which you have been weighed, neither gold nor silver has been the counterpoise, but God has in a

manner compared you with his own greatness; and in delivering himself to death, has declared the value of your soul by the price at which it has been purchased. He could neither be deceived nor constrained; he has voluntarily formed the contract and paid the ransom.

O my soul, thy value has no other limit than the greatness of God, since the well-beloved of the Father has redeemed thee with his precious blood.

THURSDAY.

On the esteem and care Man owes to his Soul. (*Continued*)

1st Point. Consider—it is unavailing to know the intrinsic value of your soul, unless, with the aid of divine grace, which will not be denied, you endeavour to give it its full perfection. You cannot add to the perfections of the body, which are limited, but the soul is endowed with a capacity, in a manner infinite, to increase in perfection through your care and industry. Your soul can always advance in the science of salvation, which liberates from the slavery, and disabuses us of the false maxims of the world, discovering all it esteems to be falsehood and imposture, and true wisdom to consist in the knowledge and love of God. Your soul can continually advance in sanctity, which consists in the possession and exercise of solid virtues. It can be elevated by humility above creatures, by poverty above riches, and by mortification above the senses. Your soul can daily augment its merit; there is not a moment of time that cannot gain an eternal recompense. In fine, it can continually extend the glory of God within itself, rendering him more absolute by its obedience, more glorious by its praise. God, who is always equally great in himself, is not always the same in the soul of man. He is living in the just, who act

only by his spirit; he is dead in the sinner by whom he is forgotten. Examine attentively what dominion does he exercise over the faculties of your soul.

2nd Point. Consider—as it is in your power to elevate your soul to a high degree of glory, and secure to it eternal happiness, you are also at liberty to debase and render it for ever miserable. But why would you be the enemy of your own soul? why voluntarily precipitate it into everlasting flames? How strange that man, endowed with reason, who values all things by the lights of his understanding, knows not how to estimate himself! Jesus Christ has bestowed on your soul faith as a pledge of his love, hope as a dowry, grace as a treasure, his blood as a ransom; why then would you faithlessly and ungratefully renounce him to adhere to his enemies? Daughter of the Eternal Father, temple of the Holy Spirit, companion of angels, heir of grace, why would you degrade yourself? what have you to do with flesh and blood? O Christian! do you not blush to lead a life so unworthy the dignity of your soul, and to sully with vice a heart created for God alone.

3rd Point. Consider—what account will you henceforth make of your soul? The love that God has manifested towards it should, if possible, be the measure of your zeal. Whilst you wantonly expose your soul to danger, the divine goodness spares no effort for its safety. He employs prayer—*have pity on thy own soul.* Menaces—"This night do they require thy soul of thee." (*Luke*, xii. 20.) Complaints—"What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?" (*Matt.* xvi. 26.) Nevertheless you remain insensible, and excuse yourself on the plea of difficulty. Is it too much to require of you what your angel guardian does for the welfare of your soul? With what vigilance does he guard, and what lights from heaven aid it! How assiduously does he attend to all its necessities! If this model seems too perfect,

is it much to demand for the soul the same attention you pay to the body? How sensibly do you feel a light corporal malady; how prompt, how indefatigable in seeking a remedy! Yet you leave the soul to languish under mortal wounds, fearless that the justice of God may permit it miserably to perish. From the infernal abyss you may draw a subject of confusion. The demon leaves no means untried to compass your destruction. What labour should you deem too great to ensure your eternal salvation?

FRIDAY.

On Jesus healing the Deaf and Dumb Man.

1st Point. Consider—"And they bring to him one deaf and dumb; and they besought him that he would lay his hand upon him." (*Mark*, vii. 32.) This man could neither speak for himself, nor hear the voice of his Saviour. How often has the Blessed Virgin and the saints rendered you a like charitable office, presenting you to Jesus, and beseeching him to purify the faculties of your soul, and unbind your tongue for publishing his praises or confessing your sins. How often has your self-love raised obstacles to the mercy of your Saviour. Your vocation requires that you lead others to God by example, counsel, holy conversation, prayers, and tears; how shall you fulfil this imperative obligation, if you are forgetful of yourself?

2nd Point. Consider—there is a vicious deafness, as that of the proud, whose ears are closed to good counsel; and of sinners, whose corrupt hearts will not profit by the word of God, or the exhortation of the virtuous; that of persons whom the tumult of the world renders deaf to divine inspirations; and of the avaricious, who will not listen to the cry of the poor. "He that stop-

peth his ear to the cry of the poor, shall also cry himself, and shall not be heard." (*Prov.* xxi. 13.) There is also a virtuous deafness, that listens not to the voice of temptation, and hears not the flatterer, or the caresses of flesh and blood, but, as St. Paulinus says, seals the ear with the seal of faith against the deceitful sounds of the syren. A deafness excluding the voice of slander, according to the advice of the wise man: "Hedge in thy ears with thorns, hear not a wicked tongue," (*Eccle.* xxviii. 28);—in a word, a deafness that prudently dissembles as if it heard not. Such was the practice of David: "But I as a deaf man, heard not." (*Ps.* xxxvii. 14.) Are you of the number of those of whom the prophet says: "They shall put the hand upon the mouth, and their ears shall be deaf." (*Mich.* vii. 16.)

3rd Point. Consider—who are they whose tongues are bound by the demon? They who neglect prayer, and know not how to converse with God. They who conceal or disguise their vices in the tribunal of penance. They who acknowledge not benefits received, whether from God or man. They who fail to reprove vice when obliged thereto by duty, or who are not zealous in promoting pious conversation. As there are occasions in which you should speak, there are also those in which you should be silent. As when you have been made the depository of a secret. When you have conferred a benefit: for the benefactor is bound to forget, the receiver always to be mindful of a favour. When you hear your neighbour traduced: "Hast thou heard a word against thy neighbour? let it die within thee." (*Eccle.* xix. 10.) Finally, when you are inclined either to praise or excuse yourself: "I was dumb, and was humbled, and kept silence from good things." (*Ps.* xxxviii. 3.)

SATURDAY.

On the circumstances of the Miracle.

1st Point. Consider—"And taking him from the multitude apart, he put his fingers into his ears, and spitting, he touched his tongue; and looking up to heaven he groaned, and said to him: *Ephpheta*, which is, be thou opened." (*Mark*, vii. 33, 34.) Jesus makes use of two means in the curing of this man; that is, action and words. Observe, he acts before he speaks; he acts more than he speaks. Imitate this adorable Master. Be docile in receiving his instructions, faithful in following him and executing that which he teaches. Like him let your words be few, your good works many.

2nd Point. Consider—"Be thou opened." All that the Son of God says and does in operating this miracle, is in appearance trivial. A word, a sigh, a heaven-directed glance, a touch of his finger moistened with saliva. He might have employed the most pompous ceremonies, but he is the Master of humility, and therefore accomplishes his most marvellous works in unostentatious privacy. He performs stupendous actions by the weakest instruments. He also proves on this occasion that he demands only a little, to give much. For frequently in recompense of fidelity in trifling acts of mortification, he causes the soul to taste the sweetness of those words: "Well done, good and faithful servant, because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." (*Matt.* xxv 21.) To conclude, he teaches you by this exercise of humility, that the more you annihilate yourself in the divine presence, the more will God exalt you; and that from the foundation of your nothingness, animated by the spirit of Jesus Christ,

he will raise an edifice of sanctity, whereon to display the prodigies of his power and love.

3rd Point. Consider—"Be thou opened." To the Incarnate Word alone it appertains to pronounce this short but efficacious *fiat*. It is the *word* of the Father; the living and life-giving *word*; the Omnipotent *word* by which all things were made. *One word* suffices to confer health, sanctity, and a blessed eternity. Beseech the Word of the Eternal Father, the mystic key of David, that opens and closes without opposition, that he would vouchsafe to open the faculties of your soul; your mind, to receive and follow his light; your heart, to catch the fire of his divine love; your eyes, to admire his wonderful works; your lips, to proclaim his praise; your ears, to hear and obey his voice; and the entire capacity of your being, to receive and adore his supreme majesty.

O divine Lamb, open to me the book of life, which thou alone canst unseal; open to me the treasure of thy grace, that I may be enriched by thy gifts; open to me thy heavenly kingdom, that I may enter into the joy of my Lord, to praise him for ever and ever.

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

On the Fruits of the Miracle.

1st Point. Consider—"And immediately his ears were opened." (*Mark*, vii. 35.) There are four members which you should keep continually open to the spirit of Jesus Christ, and closed to that of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Your eyes should be open to believe with fidelity; your ears, to listen with humility; your lips, to speak for the edification of your neighbour; and your hands, to exercise works of mercy

towards the poor. But to the end your enemies may not enter, you must place secure guards to close them against all pernicious and dangerous objects, especially after prayer, or receiving the holy communion. When Noah entered the ark, God closed it on the outside, and would himself be the keeper of the key. Beseech him that he would also hold the key of your heart, and so close the door of your senses against all exterior objects, that he alone may enter and dwell therein.

2nd Point. Consider—"And the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke right." (*Mark*, vii. 35.) "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man." (*James*, iii. 2.) But in order to rectify your words and render them perfect, you must regulate them by those of the Incarnate Word. You must speak like him, with truth, simplicity, meekness, and affability. You must speak of him, and of his divine perfections, with zeal, joy, and respectful love. You must speak for him, that is, with a pure intention, seeking only his glory in all your conversations. In fine, you must speak to him, and through him, to his Father, and to your neighbour; to his Father with humility, confidence, and love; to your neighbour with discretion, modesty, and charity.

3rd Point. Consider—"And so much the more did they wonder, saying: He hath done all things well; he hath made both the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak." (*Mark*, vii. 37.) The Incarnate Word manifests an adorable wisdom in the whole economy of the Incarnation, and the redemption of mankind. Nothing is wanting to the perfection of his work: "He hath done all things well," both as to the motive by which they are animated, and the manner of their performance, which has all the conditions requisite for rendering them perfect in themselves, glorious to God, and profitable to men. "He hath done all things well," whether in nature, grace, or glory. The hand "that hath done

all things well," must be the stay of your confidence. You should firmly believe, that whatever he operates in your regard, "He hath done all things well," even when you feel it most painful and contradictory to natural inclination. For it is precisely in such conjunctures he favours you most, provided you love and approve his work, saying, in the devotedness of your heart: "He hath done all things well." With and by the same all-effective hand, you are to co-operate for your own perfection and the salvation of your neighbour.

O hand, omnipotent, merciful, and liberal, deign to act on me by thy divine authority, in freely disposing of all that regards me; act in me by thy tender love, governing every power of my soul, every movement of my heart; act with me by thy protecting and assisting grace, that I may correspond faithfully with, and fervently embrace thy ever adorable will in all things.

MONDAY.

On Jesus multiplying Bread the second time.

1st Point. Consider—"In those days, again, when there was a great multitude, and had nothing to eat: calling his disciples together, he saith to them: I have compassion on the multitude, for behold they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat." (*Mark*, viii. 1, 2.) Behold this crowd of dumb, blind, and lame, at the feet of the Incarnate Word. Consider in what society the King of Heaven takes his delight, and on whom he displays the magnificence of his infinite power. Prostrate yourself with them at his sacred feet: expose to his eye of mercy the wounds of your soul; perhaps its maladies are more dangerous than those of the infirm multitude. But in order to obtain

your cure with more certainty, resolve as far as in your power to relieve your neighbour in all his spiritual and corporal necessities.

2nd POINT. Consider—"I have compassion on the multitude." The mercy of Jesus is extended to all the living. For the just, the sinner, and the afflicted, he manifests the same paternal tenderness. Were it not for his infinite mercy, not only should the wicked perish, but the good also would *faint in the way*. The mercy of Jesus is extended to the suffering souls in purgatory, who sigh after their deliverance, which they can obtain only through the suffrages of the church, being no longer in a condition to offer for themselves either sacrifice, or prayers, or alms-deeds, to propitiate divine justice. The mercy of Jesus is extended to the blessed in heaven: "Mercy shall be built up for ever in the heavens." (*Ps.* lxxxviii. 3.) "Thou shalt arise and have mercy on Sion: for it is time to have mercy on it, for the time is come. For the stones thereof have pleased thy servants." (*Ps.* ci. 14, 15.) During this life the Son of God prepares the stones that are to compose the edifice; he hews and polishes them with care. After death he will lay them in the temple of his glory, because the time of mercy shall have arrived, and his blood, the price of their purchase, will render them precious in his sight, and that of his holy angels. Now, Christian soul, is the time to build up holy Sion. When the temple shall be constructed and dedicated, "time shall be no longer." (*Apoc.* x. 6.) Wo to the stones that shall be rejected by the builder.

3rd POINT. Consider—the difference between this second multiplication of bread, and the former. According to the holy Fathers, it represents the all-wise dispensations of our Lord towards the faithful of the ancient testament, and those of the new. Of the former it is said: "You seek me, not because you have seen miracles, but because you did eat of the loaves, and

were filled." (*John*, vi. 26.) This marks the terrestrial spirit of the Jews, who sought only temporal benefits. But it is not said of the latter, because the minds of Christians who live according to the gospel are elevated to desire graces purely spiritual. To the one was given barley bread, the food of menials; to the other, the bread of wheat, the bread of children. Render thanks to your heavenly father, who has vouchsafed to nourish you as the child of his bosom, with the pure wheat of his love. You enjoy the reality of what the Jews behold but the shadow. You possess the Incarnate Word; they sigh in expectation of his coming. You are nourished with the eucharistic sacrament; the manna, which was only its type, has alone been their portion.

TUESDAY.

On Jesus reproving the Pharisees, who demanded a sign.

1st Point. Consider—"And there came to him the Pharisees and Sadducees tempting: and they asked him to show them a sign from heaven. But he answered, and said to them: When it is evening, you say: It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.....You know then how to discern the face of the sky: and can you not know the signs of the times?" (*Matt.* xvi. 1, 2, 3.) The Son of God reproaches the Jews, that whilst they were quicksighted in foreseeing and arranging temporal concerns, they closed their eyes to the signs that announced his coming, and the miracles that proclaimed his divine mission. Nevertheless, impelled by curiosity, they ask a sign. The Incarnate Wisdom replies: "A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign: and a sign shall not be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet." (*Matt.* xvi. 4.) There are many who dive profoundly into all the secrets of nature, and inquisitively

search into the ways of God, yet perceive not the perils of sin by which they are surrounded, or the eternal abyss already opening beneath them. May you not be reproached with a similar blindness? How many favourable opportunities for advancing your salvation do you suffer to escape, which, alas! can never, never be recalled!

2nd Point. Consider—"And leaving them, he went up again into the ship, and passed to the other side of the water." (*Mark*, viii. 13.) The pride and malice of the Pharisees oblige the Son of God, though with mingled feelings of sorrow and indignation, to abandon them. Beware, Christian soul, of contradicting the merciful designs of your Saviour, and provoking the fatal effects of his wrath. Approach him by devout recollection of his divine presence; beseech him never to forsake you; say to him with David: "O God, be not thou far from me: O my God, make haste to my help." (*Ps* lxx. 12.) Jesus Christ is the true friend whom you must never quit or exchange for another. To him alone you can justly say: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." (*John*, vi. 69.)

3rd Point. Consider—"And he charged them, saying: Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees." (*Mark*, viii. 15.) The Son of God speaks of the doctrine of those men, but the disciples understand not: "And they reasoned among themselves, saying. We have no bread. Which Jesus knowing, saith to them: Why do you reason because you have no bread? do you not yet know nor understand? have you still your heart blinded?" (*Mark*, viii. 16, 17.) The disciples were guilty of a fault by interpreting the words of their divine Master in so gross a sense, and by a want of confidence in his power and goodness. This divine Master, who tenderly loved, reproves them with mingled severity and sweetness: "O ye of little faith, do you not yet understand, neither do you remember the

five loaves among five thousand men, and how many baskets you took up?" (*Matt.* xvi. 8, 9.) The spirit of the Pharisees, that is, the spirit of the world and of pride, is capable of corrupting the holiest actions. The spirit of poverty and detachment from terrestrial goods, is indispensable for those who tend to perfection. The apostles were so indifferent to temporal conveniences, that they even forgot to take bread for their voyage; and no sooner did they evince the slightest anxiety, than they are severely reproved by their divine Master. Love of poverty drew him down from heaven to seek it upon earth where he embraced its severest privations, and he has bequeathed it as an inheritance to his faithful followers.

WEDNESDAY.

On Jesus delivering the Lunatic whom the Disciples could not cure.

1st Point. Consider—"And coming to his disciples he saw a great multitude about them, and the Scribes disputing with them. And presently all the people seeing Jesus were astonished and struck with fear, and running to him they saluted him. And he asked them: What do you question about among you?" (*Mark*, ix. 13, 14, 15) Jesus leaves not his faithful servants in time of need; he comes to their assistance, striking their enemies with dismay,—"And presently all the people seeing Jesus were astonished and struck with fear." Many are of opinion that a heavenly light beaming from his countenance produced this terror. With what consternation shall that countenance overwhelm the wicked on the last tremendous day!

2nd Point. Consider—"And when he was come to the multitude, there came to him a man falling down on

his knees before him, saying: Lord, have pity on my son, for he is a lunatic, and suffereth much. And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him." (*Matt.* xvii. 14, 15.) How miserable the condition of those who are enslaved by the devil! how cruel his tyranny, and how difficult to be cast off! There are many spiritual lunatics enslaved to the maxims of the world; they walk in darkness. If they perform virtuous deeds, it is by caprice or natural inclination; the various occurrences of life act violently upon their minds; they fall from sin to sin. Anger transports them. Their hearts are torn with envy, or dried up with sadness. Never was tyranny so cruel or extravagant as that which the spirit of the world exercises on those who groan beneath its yoke. Beseech the Saviour of the world, the true Sun of Justice, to penetrate with his sweet influence all the powers of your soul, illuminating your mind with his rays, warming your heart with the ardour of his love, and confirming your will by his changeless stability. Finally, beg that in all things his grace may be your impelling and regulating principle.

3rd Point. Consider—"Then Jesus answered and said: O unbelieving and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?" (*Matt.* xvii. 16.) Jesus suffers in you, because you hold his spirit captive, and suffer it not to act with freedom. He suffers with you, because you respect not his presence, and prefer the society of creatures to his divine conversation. He suffers from you, because he finds in you a continual opposition to his adorable will, repugnance to his cross, and resistance to all his designs. He suffers for you, because, not satisfied with offending him in your own person, you lead others by your example to transgress his precepts. Does it not suffice that Jesus Christ suffered for you during his mortal life? Will you, in the malice of your heart, renew his pains? Though now glorious and impassible, would you still be

his cross, and force him to apply to you the reproach, "How long shall I suffer you?"

O divine clemency! permit not my malice and ingratitude to overcome thy forbearing goodness. An infinite patience alone could support my continued and multiplied offences. But, Lord, *suffer me*, for I am weak, and preserve me, as thou hast done from the beginning, until purified by thy grace, I arrive at thy eternal beatitude.

THURSDAY.

On Jesus delivering the Lunatic. (*Continued.*)

1st Point. Consider—"And he asked his father: How long time is it since this hath happened unto him? But he said: From his infancy.....And Jesus saith to him: If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." (*Mark*, ix. 20, 22.) After the menaces of Jesus follow the effects of his goodness. He orders the afflicted father to bring his son; for who can approach unto God unless attracted by his grace? To cure the incredulity of the father, he inquires into what he already knows: "How long time is it since this hath happened unto him?" Be consoled then, even when his wrath seems armed for your destruction. In a future life his vengeance on impenitent sinners will be eternal. At present you can appease his indignation by sincere repentance. "When his wrath shall be kindled in a short time, blessed are all they that trust in him," (*Ps.* ii. 13.); for "all things are possible," if you have a firm faith, animated by hope and love. With this you shall vanquish temptation, surmount difficulties, eradicate vice, and acquire all virtues. Say with the father of this lunatic: "I do believe, Lord; help my unbelief." (*Mark.* ix. 23.)

2nd Point. Consider—"He threatened the unclean spirit, saying to him: Deaf and dumb spirit, I command thee go out of him, and enter not any more into him." (*Mark*, ix. 24.) Happy are you, if, when you see, Jesus *threatens*, in order to correct you, lest a deaf and dumb spirit, entering your soul, you fall into final impenitence. The demon is constrained to obey the command of the Son of God. Let your obedience be voluntary, saying with David: "I will freely sacrifice to thee, and will give praise, O God, to thy name, because it is good." (*Ps.* liii. 8.) Jesus forbids the evil spirit to re-enter, for he is a Saviour who not only delivers from present, but preserves from future danger. "And crying out and greatly tearing him, he went out of him, and he became as one dead, so that many said: He is dead. But Jesus taking him by the hand, lifted him up; and he arose." (*Mark*, ix. 25, 26.) Divine Wisdom frequently permits that his servants, for their greater sanctification, be assailed by trials interior and exterior. They seem as dead, utterly deprived of the light and sentiments of piety; but this death, like that of the lunatic, is only apparent: divine love, the life of the soul, though concealed under temptation, lives in the heart, which it preserves from consenting to sin; and the soul having passed this ordeal, is re-established with an increase of grace, in all its former vigour.

3rd Point. Consider—"And he said to them: This kind can go out by nothing but by prayer and fasting." (*Mark*, ix. 28.) Vice, when become habitual, can only be eradicated with great pain and difficulty; but let not the resistance of corrupt nature disgust the soul. Assiduous prayer and mortification, animated by a lively faith and confidence in God, give a marvellous power over the evil one; for the exercise of these virtues spiritualizes man, and elevates him to a condition for combating and triumphing over temptation. Mortification purifies both the spiritual and corporal faculties;

prayer unites the soul to God, and is terrible to the demons. The prayer of the truly mortified man is equally pleasing to God and dreadful to the devil. By how much it contributes to the salvation of others, you may judge how profitable to him by whom it is practised, says St. Leo.

FRIDAY.

On Jesus paying the Tribute.

1st Point. Consider—"And when they were come to Capharnaum, they that received the didrachmas came to Peter, and said to him: Doth not thy Master pay the didrachma?" (*Matt.* xvii. 23.) St. Peter knowing the humility of his Master hesitates not to reply: "He said: Yes." (*Matt.* xvii. 24.) The Son of God has paid other tributes alike voluntary on his part. Not content to render homage to his Eternal Father, and submit in all things to his divine will, he would also be subject to his blessed mother and St. Joseph. He submitted to bear all the sinless infirmities of human nature, and subjected himself to the burden of the ceremonial law. In a word, he was obedient to the Roman Emperor, to his iniquitous judges, and barbarous executioners. He has *paid the tribute* of your ransom, yet you are ungrateful; he has discharged your debts, yet you refuse to render what you owe him on so many titles.

2nd Point. Consider—"And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, saying: What is thy opinion, Simon? The kings of the earth, of whom do they receive tribute or custom? of their children, or of strangers? And he said: Of strangers. Jesus said to him: Then the children are free." (*Matt.* xvii. 24, 25.) Jesus being the consubstantial Son of God is independent of creatures; they, on the contrary, owe him the

tribute of homage, yet he daily confers on them gratuitous benefits. How many unmerited graces has he bestowed on you? How many sins has he pardoned you which he had a right to punish? Did you deeply meditate these truths you would be more liberal towards him; you would not draw an ungenerous distinction between matters of obligation and devotion. It would suffice to know what is most pleasing to his Divine Majesty; you would blush to confine yourself to that which is strictly obligatory. Moreover, you are indispensably obliged to works of penance, to mortify your senses, to observe the gospel precepts or counsels, and to accomplish the vows of your baptism or religious profession. The Son of God cancels with his precious blood the debt you contracted by sin, and will you refuse a light satisfaction to the justice of his Eternal Father?

3rd Point. Consider—"But that we may not scandalize them, go to the sea, and cast in a hook: and that fish which shall first come up, take.....and give it to them for me and thee." (*Matt.* xvii. 26) Reflect on the poverty and charity of the Son of God. He is so poor, observes St. Jerome, he has not wherewith to pay the tribute; but his charity works a miracle, lest the weak should be scandalized. He anticipates the solicitude of St. Peter, predicting what he should find in the mouth of the fish, herein displaying his divine prescience. He manifests his infinite power by effecting what he had foretold. He prefers St. Peter to the other disciples, and honours him by associating him with himself: "Give it to them for me and thee."

Lord, thou payest tribute to Cæsar for thyself and thy apostle; thou wilt soon pay that due to divine justice, not for thyself, but for all the human race. Then thou wilt no more say, "Give it for me and thee," but in the excess of thy mercy thou wilt deliver thyself as a universal ransom for mankind.

SATURDAY.

On Jesus reproving the Ambition of his Disciples.

1st Point. Consider—"At that hour the disciples came to Jesus, saying: Who, thinkest thou, is the greater in the kingdom of heaven?" (*Matt.* xviii. 1.) The Son of God had conversed with his apostles on the ignominy of his death, and the glory of his resurrection, instructing them that humiliation is the path to true greatness; and instead of reflecting on the means of arriving at heavenly glory, they figure to themselves the splendour of a temporal royalty, and dispute for the precedence of this imaginary kingdom. The honour which the Son of God had conferred on St. Peter in the miraculous payment of the tribute renewed the dispute. They are poor fishermen, their master continually exhorts them to the practice of humility; their condition is abject, their birth lowly, their minds uncultivated; how inadequate then must they be to fill exalted stations? Nevertheless ambition blinds them, and raises these disputes; learn, hence, the melancholy weakness of man, but be persuaded, that of all creatures you are the weakest, and most liable to be deceived by passion and self-love.

2nd Point. Consider—"And they came to Capharnaum. And when they were in the house, he asked them, What did you treat of in the way? But they held their peace, for in the way they had disputed among themselves which of them should be the greatest." (*Mark*, ix. 32, 33.) The patience of the Son of God in supporting the defects of his disciples, and his wisdom in remedying them, are alike admirable. He forbears, he defers reprehension for a time, and when he reproves, it is in words that breathe only sweetness and charity. Instead of confounding them with open reproaches, he inquires with affability into the subject of

their discourse in the journey, obliging them thus to enter into themselves. Confusion caused by the accusations of conscience prevents reply; then Jesus sitting in the midst, in familiar conversation, encourages them to expose their weakness, that he may apply the cure. They do not openly declare their fault, but discover it by the question they propose: "Who, thinkest thou, is the greater in the kingdom of heaven?" Learn from this divine model to support the imperfections of your brethren; and if called on to admonish them, let the sweetness of charity season the remedy, to the end it may produce a salutary effect.

3rd Point. Consider—"And Jesus calling unto him a little child, set him in the midst of them, and said: Amen I say to you, unless you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, he is the greater in the kingdom of heaven." (*Matt.* xviii. 2, 3, 4.) The gate of the heavenly city is low and narrow, the humble alone can enter there. Jesus loves the lowly and humble, *he sets them in the midst*, because humility is the centre that attracts and conserves all the graces of God. He tenderly embraces the humble, because he delights in their simplicity, innocence, and obedience. He exalts them to the most glorious thrones in the celestial kingdom. We arrive at a kingdom by humility, we penetrate the heavens by simplicity. Whoever would attain the pinnacle of glory, let him abase himself to the centre of lowliness, says St. Ambrose

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

On Jesus continuing to instruct his Apostles.

1st Point. Consider—"And he that shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me." (*Matt.* xviii. 5.) The poor are the representatives of Jesus Christ; in their persons he addresses you, and receives your services. If you look upon them with a worldly eye, they inspire only disdain. But the eye of faith beholds them, according to St. Augustin, as the living sacraments of religion, that conceal great treasures under a lowly appearance. In the sacrament of the altar you judge not by sensible appearances; but by the light of faith you penetrate the veils that enshroud the Incarnate Word, and bend in adoration before him. Thus should you look upon the poor; and renouncing human ideas, like the Magi, adore your God in the garb of poverty. The poor man is the temple in which Jesus Christ would be adored; his hand, the altar on which you lay the sacrifice; your heart is to be the victim presented, while you subtract from your temporal comforts to nourish Jesus Christ in his suffering members. The Son of God conceals himself under the torn garments of the poor, rendering them more precious than the purple of monarchs. The poor stretch forth the hand and God himself receives the alms.

2nd Point. Consider—"For whosoever shall give you to drink a cup of water in my name, because you belong to Christ, Amen, I say to you, he shall not lose his reward." (*Mark*, ix. 40.) The poor are your fellow-members in Jesus Christ; you have one common head that unites you in the same body, in order to bind your hearts more closely together; why then should you feel indifferent for the sufferings of the poor? You are children of the same father, followers of the same master, redeemed at the same price. For the poor and the

rich the same blood has been shed, and you aspire to the same beatitude. Why then are you insensible to the necessities of the poor, since it is Jesus Christ that suffers in them? Why will you refuse a morsel of bread to those who have received, like you, the sacrament of baptism? Why do you judge them unworthy to sit at your table, with whom you expect to be fellow-guests at the heavenly banquet?

3rd Point. Consider—the Son of God presents himself in the person of the poor, that he may confer on you his benefits. The poor should not be ungrateful; yet truly you are more interested in relieving their wants, because you draw from the alms bestowed, a greater profit: and had you a lively faith, you would not regard them as debtors, but rather as benefactors. The lips of the poor are the sanctuary whence the Saviour pronounces a sentence of mercy; their prayer is your refuge, and their benedictions ascend to open for you the gates of the heavenly kingdom, which Eternal Truth has declared to be theirs. Such is the goodness and liberality of Jesus Christ; he desires to receive your gifts by the hands of the poor, that he may return a hundred-fold, even in the present life; and that the temporal relief bestowed on your suffering brethren, may be a pledge of your eternal salvation. The alms you dispense to the poor, are the matter of your crown, the pledge of your beatitude, and the prelude of your everlasting salvation.

MONDAY.

On Jesus exhorting to a Love of the Poor. (*Continued.*)

1st Point. Consider—"And he that shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me." (*Matt.* xviii. 5.) Love and reverence for Jesus Christ should

inspire commiseration for the poor. As a Christian, you glory in being the child of the Father of mercies; how then can you behold with cold indifference, not merely a fellow-creature, but, in his person, your Redeemer, who has charged himself with all the afflictions of the miserable? If it is shameful to be a delicate member, under a thorn-crowned head, why do you repel with disgust your fellow-members in Jesus Christ? If you love him, who, for your sake, became "a Man of Sorrows," (*Isaiah*, liii. 3,) this spirit will lead you with fervour to the dwellings of the afflicted. In the noisome air of hospitals, or the horrors of a prison, you will seek Jesus Christ, and you will find him; for he flees the palaces of the great, whilst the haunts of suffering are his chosen abode. Since the Incarnate Wisdom has sought poverty in Bethlehem, and espoused it on Calvary, the saints have loved it as a mother; and far from shunning the poor, they only believed themselves disciples of Jesus Christ when they embraced voluntary poverty for his sake.

2nd Point. Consider—love and reverence for Jesus Christ should inspire humility towards the poor. You should not be ashamed to enter the abodes of the poor, to visit the sick, or be seen amongst the abject; because, being the living images of Jesus Christ, it is an honour to serve him in their persons. The greatest monarchs have descended from the throne to render him, at the feet of the poor, a testimony of their love. To the Son of God, then, the poor are indebted for the charity of his servants. He renders their poverty precious, as he has rendered it adorable in his own divine person. Seek and cherish him therefore in the persons of the poor, if you would give him a solid proof of love.

3rd Point. Consider—love and reverence for Jesus Christ should inspire liberality towards the poor. The relief bestowed on the distressed, returns to God as its final term and object. Adore, herein, the designs of

your merciful Father, who adopts the poor, in order to overcome, by the consideration of his love, whatever could narrow your heart in their regard. Jesus Christ, says St. Chrysostom, should be your first heir, and in the distribution of your temporal goods, the poor should be assigned a portion. Is it not unworthy of a Christian to spare nothing for the gratification of his senses, yet complain of the least expense for the service of God or the salvation of his brethren? You can purchase heaven with a little earth; for a trifle you can obtain a kingdom; give a mite and you shall receive all things; give to the poor, and it shall be returned to you an hundred-fold.

TUESDAY.

On Jesus proposing maxims of Humility and Charity.

1st Point. Consider—"Wo to the world, because of scandals." (*Matt.* xviii. 7.) The world is filled with scandals, that is to say, with snares and rocks, that are an impediment to good, and an incentive to evil. You can avoid these dangers with the aid of divine grace, and the assistance of your tutelar angel, who sustains you, "lest perhaps thou dash thy foot against a stone." (*Matt.* iv. 6.) But you cannot remove them either from your own path or from the world in general. "For it must needs be that scandals come," (*Matt.* xviii. 7,) either from the envy of the devil, the frailty and malice of men, or the passions and inordinate affections that spring from human depravity. A man should not live without fear and distrust, says St. Bernard, since he bears within himself the cause of his danger.

2nd Point. Consider—"But nevertheless, wo to the man by whom the scandal cometh. It were better for him that a mill-stone should be hanged about his

neck, and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea." (*Matt.* xviii. 7, 6.) It is a greater miracle, says St. Gregory, to convert a sinner, than to resuscitate the dead. It is also a greater evil to scandalize your neighbour, and destroy his spiritual and immortal life, than to deprive him of a life that is only temporal. If Jesus Christ has given his life for the redemption of a soul, is not the crime of him who destroys it, greater than that of the Jews, who shed his sacred blood. Beware then of scandalizing the weak, lest you become an enemy of the cross of Christ. Rather, as St. Paul admonishes, suffer every inconvenience, that you may not endanger the conscience of your brother. "And through thy knowledge shall thy weak brother perish, for whom Christ hath died? Now when you sin thus against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ." (1 *Cor.* viii. 11, 12.)

3rd Point. Consider—"And if thy eye scandalize thee, pluck it out. It is better for thee with one eye to enter into the kingdom of God, than having two eyes to be cast into the hell of fire: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not extinguished." (*Mark*, ix. 46, 47.) Thrice in the same place does the Son of God repeat this terrifying sentence. He instructs you herein to retrench by mortification, every occasion of sin, and to sacrifice all that is dear, even life itself, rather than consent to an offence against God. Would you be delivered from danger?—Love not the world. Mortify your senses and your mind. Mortification is *the sword of the spirit*, that cuts off all scandals. Often meditate those eternal flames, which are to the reprobate what salt is to victims. "For every one shall be salted with fire, and every victim shall be salted with salt." (*Mark*, ix. 48.) But its frequent remembrance will be for you a preservative against all vices. For these holy thoughts are wings that elevate you above the snares of the world.

WEDNESDAY.

On the second maxim of Jesus Christ.

1st Point. Consider—"See that you despise not one of these little ones: for I say to you, that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father, who is in heaven." (*Matt.* xviii. 10.) The infinite goodness of our heavenly Father has given to each of us a prince of his court, to accompany, guard, and direct us, from the moment of our birth to our expiring breath. How great then the dignity of a soul, since the angels consider it glorious to be employed in its service! How dangerous to despise those who are under the protection of angels, that support their interests, and present their prayers, by an humble and sacred ministry, before the throne of God.

2nd Point. Consider—God having given his well-beloved Son for the redemption of man, he could not refuse him the ministry of angels. The soul being attached to a terrestrial body, and enclosed in that obscure prison, suffers many miseries; consequently, it needs the succour of those pure spirits. The soul being surrounded by invisible and powerful enemies, requires invisible defenders still more powerful. In fine, God would commence here on earth that communion which shall continue eternally in heaven, between the angelic and human natures. Judge, hence, the value of the benefit conferred on you, and form now with your angel guardian, that intimate friendship which shall last during eternity.

3rd Point. Consider—your obligations to those heavenly spirits, especially to your angel guardian. What reverence do you owe his dignity, what gratitude for the good offices he continually renders you? With what confidence should you have recourse to him in all your necessities? Weak though we are, says St. Bernard,

what shall we fear under such protectors? They can neither be overcome by violence, nor deceived by fraud. They are faithful, wise, powerful: why should we tremble? Certainly you have nothing to fear but your own ingratitude and infidelity; your holy angel will never abandon you in life or death; but take care, that having faithfully assisted you to the end, you deserve that he render you a favourable testimony before the judgment seat of God. If, unhappily, you should merit a sentence of condemnation, he will abandon you with sorrow to the fury of the demons. I always contemplate my good angel at my side, says St. Bernard; I fear and respect him as my guide to heaven, and as one who daily presents my thoughts and actions before the throne of the Lamb.

THURSDAY.

On the third maxim of Jesus Christ.

1st Point. Consider—"If thy brother shall offend against thee, go and rebuke him between thee and him alone." (*Matt.* xviii. 15.) In these words our Lord enjoins not only to pardon injuries, but also to withdraw your brother from sin, by means of fraternal correction. This duty of charity is not merely a counsel but an obligatory precept, which especially regards superiors, though it extends to all in general, when it is apparent that the admonition will be profitable; otherwise follow the counsel of the wise man—"Rebuke not a scorner, lest he hate thee," (*Prov.* ix. 8,) and offend God still more. To permit sloth, tepidity, dissimulation, or human respect, to prevent the discharge of a duty so important, is a fault most severely condemned in holy writ. Cherish in your heart a great zeal for justice, and an extreme aversion for sin. Never connive at or flatter vice. Say

not with Cain, "Am I my brother's keeper?" (*Gen.* iv. 9.) When called on to reprove evil, silence becomes a tacit consent. You become the accomplice of those who sin, if you fail to reprove them. Meditate this truth; and if obliged to watch over others, fear the awful account you will have to render, lest you perish with those who perish through your fault. "He, indeed, is taken away in his iniquity, but I will require his blood at the hand of the watchman." (*Ezekiel*, xxxiii. 6.)

2nd Point. Consider—"Rebuke him between thee and he alone." Never reprove another until you have examined whether charity be your impelling principle; whatever proceeds from embittered feeling, is the act of one who would punish rather than correct his brother. When obliged to reprehend, first enter into your own heart; if you feel guilty of a similar fault, lament it in the divine presence; afterwards admonish your brother. If you cannot accuse yourself on the same head, let compassion precede correction; remembering that human frailty renders you liable to the same. Reprehend not in public when you can do it in private, or before few witnesses. Charity obliges you to guard the reputation of your brother, when the fault is not public. If, having admonished him in secret, and in the presence of one or two witnesses, he refuse to hear, address yourself to the Church; that is, to the prelates and superiors, who have received authority in such cases.

3rd Point. Consider—"If he shall hear thee, thou shall gain thy brother." (*Matt.* xviii. 15); that is, you shall save his soul, which is the fruit that Jesus Christ designs to draw from fraternal correction. Your charity and zeal are weak if you neglect a duty so salutary. You are still more blind if you cannot suffer a reproof, and if you receive as an injury that which is a signal benefit. If you sin, says St. Augustin, and will not suffer correction, this fault is more grievous than the former. Would you be left to perish rather

than endure a little pain or confusion? You feel no resentment towards the physician who inflicts pain in effecting your cure. He that corrects, does you the same good office. Why should you be offended? Self-love impels you to expect, on such occasions, a mild and soothing tone in your monitor; but should he not rather endeavour to awake you from your lethargy, by his charitable reproof, that feeling your danger you may have recourse to the mercy of God, to find the necessary remedy. Are you ignorant that God has charged him with your soul, for which he will be called to a severe account? Would you that he suffered it to perish, and with it endanger his own salvation?

FRIDAY.

On the fourth maxim of Jesus Christ.

1st Point. Consider—"The kingdom of heaven is likened to a king, who would take an account of his servants. And when he had begun to take the account, one was brought to him that owed him ten thousand talents." (*Matt.* xviii. 23, 24.) You stand indebted to Divine Justice on account of many sins, for which you must make satisfaction in this life or the next, and of which you can obtain remission only by uniting your own penitential works with the merits and sufferings of Jesus Christ, whose precious blood purifies from all sin. You are indebted to the gratuitous bounty of God for innumerable benefits, that should be held in continual remembrance, and for which you should incessantly bless his divine goodness. Acknowledge with humility that eternal praise and service would not suffice to acquit your debt. The good qualities of body or mind, of nature or grace, with which you have been endowed, are so many talents to be employed in the

service of your Master, rendering with fidelity the fruit, hat is, the glory of your actions; a debt due to his in nite excellence and sovereign dominion. Cast yourself at the feet of the heavenly king, and beseech him, saying: "Have patience with me and I will pay thee all," (*Matt.* xviii. 26,) through the merits of my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

2nd POINT. Consider—"And the Lord of that servant being moved with pity, let him go, and forgave him the debt." (*Matt.* xviii. 27.) Adore the infinite charity of God, who limits the pardon of sin neither to number nor quality. "But if the wicked do penance for all his sins which he hath committed, and keep all my commandments, and do judgment and justice, living he shall live, and shall not die." (*Ezekiel*, xviii. 21.) The remission of sins is an asylum which the Son of God has opened in his church for your salvation. But strange ingratitude of the human heart. "When the servant was gone out, he found one of his fellow-servants that owed him an hundred pence: and laying hold of him, he throttled him, saying: Pay what thou owest. And his fellow-servant falling down, besought him, saying: Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not, but went and cast him into prison till he paid the debt." (*Matt.* xviii. 28, 29.) The injury you have received, is as a penny in comparison of ten thousand talents, which God has liberally remitted to you; yet, with unrelenting severity, you say to your fellow-servant: "Pay what thou owest." Your obduracy is a new debt, the payment of which shall be exacted without mercy, because you have been unmerciful to your brother.

3rd POINT. Consider—"Then his Lord called him, and said to him: Thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all the debt, because thou besoughtest me: shouldst not thou then have had compassion also on thy fellow-servant, even as I had compassion on thee? And his

Lord being angry, delivered him to the torturers until he paid all the debt." (*Matt.* xviii. 32, 33, 34.) From this text you learn that the sinner who refuses pardon to a brother, after having himself received forgiveness many times in the sacrament of penance, is guilty of a crime that shall be punished the more rigorously, as ingratitude towards God, whose mercy he has oftentimes experienced, notably aggravates his offence. "So also shall my heavenly Father do to you, if you forgive not every one his brother from your hearts." (*Matt.* xviii. 35.) He will cite you to his dread tribunal, and deliver you to the executioners of his justice. He will not be moved to pity, because a vindictive man is the object of his hatred. He will demand the debt even to the *last farthing*, and being ever insolvent, your pains must be interminable. If you will not imitate divine clemency in pardoning, he will imitate you in taking vengeance.

SATURDAY.

On Jesus declaring the opposition which exists between his Spirit and that of the World.

1st Point. Consider—"The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I give testimony of it, that the works thereof are evil." (*John*, vii. 7.) The spirit of Jesus Christ is a spirit of truth; the spirit of the world is vanity. You call that vanity which neither fills the place it occupies, nor sustains him who leans on it, nor profits him that labours for its acquisition. What is there in the world that can fill the human heart, since all its goods are imaginary? The world cannot yield any solid support, for it is constant in nothing but its mutability. The life of worldlings, is labour without recompense. The world produces no other fruit than disappointment. Its votaries rise but

to fall, and when fallen, consume themselves in efforts to re-ascend the eminence of fortune, only to be again cast down. Meditate this, Christian soul, and if you would find true wisdom, follow the counsel of St. Ambrose, tread under foot the maxims of the world, walk on the waves of this world, call Jesus to your assistance as did St. Peter, and to you also he will stretch out the hand.

2nd Point. Consider—the spirit of Jesus Christ is a spirit of sanctity; that of the world is a spirit of malice. In the world all tends to foment vice and expose virtue to contempt and ruin. The discourse of worldlings is an occasion of sin by the contagion of bad example. They decry piety, making it the subject of profane ridicule, or of reproach and calumny. Again, they attack it by pernicious counsels, which, under the disguise of friendship, inflict a dreadful wound. "Wo to the world, because of scandals." (*Matt.* xviii. 7.) The actions of worldlings are not less scandalous than their discourse. Violence, fraud, discord, and falsehood, are the works of the world. To conclude, the smiles of the world are still more fatal than its injuries; its favour more to be feared than its anger; its persecutions less dangerous than its caresses. "Wo to the world, because of scandals."

3rd Point. Consider—you should resolve on an eternal divorce from the world, since it is in all things opposed to the spirit of Jesus Christ. Regard it therefore as an irreconcilable enemy; shun it as excommunicated by the Son of God, stricken with his malediction, and abandoned to the demon, the prince of this world. Renounce its maxims, which are directly opposed to those of the gospel; avoid the contagion of its evil example. You have a natural propensity to imitate the vices of others, whilst you feel a difficulty in following their virtues. Above all, fly the occasions of sin, which abound in the world. I will not hazard the com-

bat, says St. Jerome, lest I should lose the victory. If I fly, I avoid the sword of the enemy; if I remain in the field, I must either conquer or die. Should I quit the certain for the uncertain? If I fly, I am not therein vanquished; on the contrary, I fly, that I may not be overcome.

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

On Jesus refused an Entrance by the Samaritans.

1st Point. Consider—"And it came to pass, when the days of his assumption were accomplishing, that he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem." (*Luke*, ix. 51.) Foreknowing the dolors and opprobrium which there awaited him, he goes to meet them with generous devotedness. Tepid souls fly the cross, whilst the faithful servants of God embrace it with ardour for his glory. The example of Jesus Christ should inspire such courage. He fled into exile even in his infancy. He quitted his home to go to Jerusalem at the festival times; again, at the close of his life to ascend Calvary; and finally, to ascend triumphantly into heaven Thus should you renounce the world and the ties of consanguinity, in order to suffer with greater constancy, to serve God with greater liberty, to meet death with greater joy, and ascend to heaven with greater glory.

2nd Point. Consider—"And he sent messengers before his face: and going, they entered into a city of the Samaritans, to prepare for him. And they received him not, because his face was of one going to Jerusalem." (*Luke*, ix. 52, 53.) The world makes profession of hating piety; therefore, when a sinner withdraws from vice, to walk in the path of virtue, which leads to the heavenly Jerusalem, he should prepare to encounter the raillery

and persecution of worldlings. If you are of the world, the world will love and applaud you. If you follow Jesus Christ, and are faithful to his laws, be not surprised if the world hate you; it has also hated your Divine Master. But it is truly strange that you so often close your heart against the Son of God, rejecting the inspirations he sends to prepare for him a place. Acknowledge it is "because his face was of one going to" Calvary. He presents himself bearing the cross, whilst you desire to receive only his consolations. You fear and reject that which teaches mortification. But if you desire to partake of the consolations, you must also share in bearing the cross.

3rd Point. Consider—"And when his disciples, James and John, had seen this, they said: Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them? And turning he rebuked them, saying: You know not of what spirit you are. The Son of Man came not to destroy souls, but to save." (*Luke*, ix. 54, 55, 56.) Adore, with profound respect, the mercy breathed in these divine words: "Jesus Christ," says St. Paul, "came into this world to save sinners, of whom I am the chief." (1 *Tim.* i. 15.) St. Augustin was penetrated with gratitude, meditating the depth of the divine counsels regarding man's salvation. Let the charity of Jesus Christ excite in you a like devotion. This divine Saviour teaches you by example, the conduct you should observe towards your neighbour. Behold with what sweetness he bears the contempt of his sacred person; he expresses no indignation, but retires silently, because the spirit of his gospel is a spirit of meekness. He is come not as a lion, but as a *lamb, to take away the sins of the world.* If he causes fire to descend from heaven, it is that of the Holy Ghost, who is essential charity. To imitate him in promoting the salvation of your neighbour, you must possess the innocence and meekness of the lamb: the innocence, be-

cause, as St. Gregory says, the hand that would heal another, must not be itself diseased; meekness, because the heart of man can be gained only by love.

MONDAY.

On Jesus healing the ten Lepers.

1st Point. Consider—"And Jesus answering, said: Were not ten made clean?—where are the nine?" (*Luke*, xvii. 17.) As nothing is more odious than ingratitude, no virtue is more estimable than that which renders all possible respect and service to a benefactor. Religion, the first of moral virtues, according to St. Augustin, consists in a grateful heart towards God, who has instituted the most adorable sacrifice to give us a means of discharging all the duties of gratitude in the most perfect manner, by offering a victim commensurate in value to the gifts bestowed by infinite bounty. God being the supreme benefactor, from whom your being with all its concomitant blessings flows, it is just to return all to him by esteem and love, the noblest sentiments of your soul; imitating the Samaritan leper, who, "when he saw that he was made clean, went back with a loud voice glorifying God, and he fell on his face before his feet, giving thanks." (*Luke*, xvii. 15, 16.)

2nd Point. Consider—the virtue of gratitude is as rare as it is excellent. Of ten lepers, nine were ungrateful, and of ten thousand Christians, on whom God has shed innumerable graces, there is scarcely one who employs them in his service. Frequently the most favoured are the most ungrateful. Blinded by sin, or immersed in worldly care, they are forgetful alike of their benefactor and themselves. "Shall thy wonders be known in the dark, and thy justice in the land of forgetfulness?" (*Ps.* lxxxvii. 13.) Your faculties and

senses are stricken with the leprosy of many sins. When Jesus Christ enters your heart in the Holy Communion, assemble those lepers, and cry to him with profound humility: "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. Whom, when he saw, he said: Go, show yourselves to the priests," (*Luke*, xvii. 13, 14,) who are established in the church, not only to judge, but to heal the spiritual leprosy. Having been cleansed in the blood of the Immaculate Lamb, do not, like these lepers, forget the grace you have received, but bless the goodness of God, "who forgiveth all thy iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with mercy and compassion; who satisfieth thy desire with good things: thy youth shall be renewed like the eagle's." (*Ps.* cii. 3, 4, 5.)

3rd Point. Consider—to render the virtue of gratitude perfect, you must esteem the benefit, and love the goodness of the benefactor. Many fail in this duty by attributing to their deserts the gift of God's gratuitous bounty, or by making little account of the favour, or rejecting it as importunate. How often have you been thus guilty in rejecting divine inspirations, or esteeming as injuries the reprimands or salutary advice of superiors. Again, to render gratitude perfect, you must proclaim the benefits of God, returning praise and thanksgiving—the only tribute he demands. Being infinitely rich, *he needeth not your goods;* but he desires to be loved and praised, because he is sovereignly good. Silence and forgetfulness are the tomb of benefits. Finally, you must employ the benefits received, for the service of God, for your own profit, or that of your neighbour. Alas! how many turn the favours of God into instruments of sin!

O Lord, thou daily augmentest my obligations by a new accession of thy benefits. Wherefore thou shouldst be ever present to my memory, ever the object of my tender love. Eternal and inexhaustible source of all

good gifts, infuse into my soul thy divine charity, that I may love thee and praise thee in time and eternity.

TUESDAY.

On Jesus preaching at the Feast of Tabernacles.

1st POINT. Consider—"Now about the midst of the feast, Jesus went up into the temple, and taught. And the Jews wondered, saying: How doth this man know letters, having never learned? Jesus answered them, and said: My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me." (*John*, vii. 14, 15, 16.) With what respect should you hear and embrace the doctrine of Jesus Christ, which issues from a source so exalted, and is communicated through the sacred lips of the Man-God! Other teachers draw their science from men or angels; but our heavenly Master imparts the science he has received from his Eternal Father; the truths he announces are drawn from the bosom of the Deity, who speaks to you by the voice of the Incarnate Word. O that you could say with your Divine Lord: My doctrine is not mine; my conversation is of heaven; it is not I that speak, but the spirit of God that speaketh in me.

2nd POINT. Consider—"If any man will do the will of him, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself. He that speaketh of himself, seeketh his own glory: But he that seeketh the glory of him that sent him, he is true, and there is no injustice in him." (*John*, vii. 17, 18.) The science of the saints can be acquired only by the practice of virtue. Sin troubles and blinds, virtue purifies and illumines the soul. God imparts the understanding of eternal truths to those who with fidelity obey his will. If you love vanity you cannot comprehend truth.

Jesus Christ reproached the Jews—"Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law." (*John*, vii. 19.) May he not say to you: Have I not given you, through the Holy Ghost, the interior law of charity, to strengthen and encourage you in the practice of virtue? Nevertheless, how many offences do you daily commit against my commandments. "If thou wilt take away the chain out of the midst of thee, and cease to stretch out the finger, and to speak that which profiteth not. Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thy health shall speedily arise, and thy justice shall go before thy face, and the glory of the Lord shall gather thee up." (*Isaiah*, lviii. 9, 8.)

3rd Point. Consider—"If a man receive circumcision on the Sabbath-day, that the law of Moses may not be broken; are you angry at me because I have healed the whole man on the Sabbath-day? Judge not according to appearances, but judge just judgment." (*John*, vii. 23, 24.) The Jews are astonished at the miracles of the Son of God; nevertheless, instead of drawing therefrom a proof of his divinity, they accuse him of holding communication with the demons. In order to render him suspected by the people, they take scandal at his healing on the Sabbath-day. Learn hence to contemn both the praises and judgments of men. It is impossible to please the world and serve Jesus Christ at the same time. Preserve a holy liberty when called on to sustain the cause of justice or piety. Let not human respect intimidate you or warp your judgment. Fear not the malediction of the world; rather esteem yourself happy to purchase at that price the blessing of your heavenly Father. Behold how the children of this world treat the Son of God. Some despise his poverty; others calumniate his doctrine and miracles; many are so abandoned as to seek his life. Only a small number profit of his heavenly instructions:—to which class do you belong?

WEDNESDAY.

On the Preaching of Jesus. (Continued.)

1st Point. Consider—"Jesus therefore said to them: Yet a little while I am with you, and then I go to him that sent me." (*John*, vii. 33.) Time is short, yet you think it too long to do penance, or work out your salvation. Time is infinitely precious, yet you squander it on trifles. Time, as a rapid flood, bears you on irresistibly to an ocean of infinite happiness or interminable misery; yet you heedlessly suffer it to flow. Time, ill employed, leads to a woful eternity; yet you idly suffer the hour to pass in which infinite mercy has appointed that you should do penance, obtain pardon for your sins, acquire grace, and merit glory. Avail yourself then of the time in which you are to avert the anger of God, and secure his divine clemency. Hasten to prepare yourself for the society of angels. Sigh after the inheritance you have deserved to lose. Aspire after the promised felicity. Renew your affections, which have grown cold, and weep for the offences you have committed. O eternity, that men would deeply meditate thy duration.

2nd Point. Consider—"You shall seek me and shall not find me" (*John*, vii. 34.) "Seek ye the Lord, while he may be found: Call upon him while he is near." (*Isaiah*, lv. 6.) You should seek him without delay. "Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day," (*Eccle.* v. 8); because "time is short." (1 *Cor.* vii. 29.) Whilst Jesus presents himself, lose not the favourable occasion of securing a happy eternity. Time passes; your life flees like a shadow; the final period will soon arrive. Seek God without delay, because you have long resisted the Holy Ghost. Children of men, how long will you be

heavy of heart? how long will you love vanity, and seek after lying? If to-day you hear his voice, if he touch your heart by the inspirations of his grace, beware of resisting his call. Seek God without delay, because had you sought him from eternity, and with all possible diligence, still you must say with St. Augustin, too late have I known thee, O eternal Truth, too late have I loved you, O eternal Beauty. Finally, seek him, because the hour is at hand when you shall be called to him to give an account. "The great day of the Lord is near, it is near and exceeding swift: the voice of the Lord is bitter, the mighty man shall there meet with tribulation." (*Soph.* i. 14.)

3rd POINT. Consider—"And where I am, thither you cannot come." (*John*, vii. 34.) You can never reach heaven by violating the divine precepts, or resisting the adorable will of God. If you reach it not, what must be your condition for an endless eternity? Thrice blessed the disciples to whom he said: "I go to prepare a place for you." (*John*, xiv. 2.) Thrice happy the soul that shall merit to behold the splendour of the heavenly Jerusalem; to enjoy the society of its blessed inhabitants; above all, to adore the King of immortal ages, seated on the throne of his majesty, surrounded by his celestial host. Beseech your benign Saviour not to exclude you from that tender prayer which, being ready to offer the sacrifice of his life, he presented to his Eternal Father for his elect: "Father, I will that where I am, they also whom thou hast given me, may be with me; that they may see my glory which thou hast given me, because thou hast loved me before the creation of the world." (*John*, xvii. 24.)

August assembly of the heavenly court! I conjure you by the charity of him who hath confirmed you in glory, whose immortality rendereth you immortal, the vision of whose divine perfections completeth your happiness, to succour us in the miseries and infirmities of

our exiles, that hereafter we may sing with you the praises of him who reigneth for ever.

THURSDAY.

On Jesus promising his Divine Spirit.

1st Point. Consider—"And the last and great day of the festivity, Jesus stood and cried, saying: If any man thirst, let him come to me, and drink." (*John*, vii. 37.) The spirit of Jesus allays the thirst and desire of things vain and perishable, which worldly men seek with inordinate affection. He who has tasted the delights of the spirit, is disgusted with the pleasures of sense. He that lives by the spirit, dies to all created objects. When a soul has found God, she renounces creatures saying with the Psalmist: "*It is good for me to adhere to my God.*" She no longer seeks exterior consolations, because she is united to the inexhaustible source of all good.

2nd Point. Consider—"If any man thirst, let him come to me, and drink." The spirit of Jesus enkindles a thirst for things spiritual, because he is the sovereign good infinitely desirable, who burns with an ardent love for you, and would be the only beloved of your heart. His liberality and munificence, says St. Gregory, are unbounded. He delights more in conferring than you do in receiving favours. Hence he says by his prophet: "All you that thirst, come to the waters: and you that have no money, make haste, buy and eat: come ye, buy wine and milk without money and without any price." (*Isaiah*, lv. 1.) And again by the apostle of love: "And the spirit and the bride say: Come. And he that heareth, let him say: Come. And he that thirsteth, let him come: and he that will, let him take the water of life freely." (*Apoc.* xxii. 17.) In a word,

so ardently does he burn to communicate himself, that by a *desire* you can purchase of him the supreme and everlasting good

3rd Point. Consider—"He that believeth in me, as the Scripture saith, *Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.*" (*John*, vii. 38.) The spirit of Jesus satisfies every desire of the heart by the abundance of his gifts. Do you desire to overcome your evil propensities, and be delivered from the burden of sin? You will find in him a source of mercy. If you glow with zeal for the salvation of souls, through him you can enlighten the darkest mind, and inflame the coldest heart. The celestial waters which your Saviour promises to faithful souls, spring from the heart of God, whence they descend on you in such abundance as even to overflow on your neighbour, according to the saying of the wise man: "Let thy fountains be conveyed abroad, and in the streets divide thy waters." (*Prov.* v. 16.) The sinner receives the gifts of God unprofitably, but the just charitably employs them for the salvation of his neighbour.

O Lord my God, attend to my prayer, let thy mercy be propitious to the desire of my heart; and dispense to thy servant those superabundant graces, that first sanctifying my own soul, will render me an efficacious instrument in thy divine hands for the salvation of my neighbour.

FRIDAY.

On Jesus declaring himself the Light of the World.

1st Point. Consider—"Therefore Jesus spoke to them, saying: I am the light of the world: he that followeth me, walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life." (*John*, viii. 12.) Jesus Christ sheds

the light of his grace on sinners, that they may understand the evil condition of their conscience, and the multitude of their offences. He sheds it on the penitent, to dissipate the obscurity, and efface the stains which passion leaves in the heart of man. He sheds it on the just, to give them a knowledge and love of his divine perfections, and render them victorious over the prince of darkness, accomplishing the saying of the wise man: "But the path of the just, as a shining light, goeth forwards, and increaseth even to perfect day. The way of the wicked is darksome; they know not where they fall." (*Prov.* iv. 18, 19.) The cause of their misfortune is, they withdraw from Jesus Christ; they follow not his maxims or example. When the Increated Light rises on the heart of man, shedding on it the rays of divine wisdom, the day of grace dawns.

O good Jesus, enlighten me with the brightness of interior light, and chase away the darkness of my heart. Send forth thy light and thy truth, and the earth shall be enlightened. (*Imit.* b. iii. c. 23.)

2nd Point. Consider—Jesus Christ will diffuse the splendour of his justice at the last day, when he "will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts." (1 *Cor.* iv. 5.) The day of universal retribution will doubtless be terrible, but that of the particular judgment will not be less so for them: "The Lord shall be known when he executeth judgments." (*Ps.* ix. 17.) The sinner who, during life, voluntarily blinds himself to his guilt, shall then be constrained to open his eyes to the Sun of Justice, and shall experience the effect of that dreadful menace: "These things hast thou done, and I was silent. Thou thoughtest unjustly that I shall be like to thee: but I will reprove thee, and set before thy face." (*Ps.* xlix. 21.) In vain shall the sinner turn from the hideous view of his crimes. Divine justice will unrelentingly present them to his sight, and force him to

pronounce his own condemnation. He will detest his iniquity with the hatred of despair, and the undying worm of remorse will gnaw him for eternity. Efface by condign penance, whilst time remains, every stain of sin: thus only can you prevent the horror and confusion that await the death of the sinner. "Understand these things, you that forget God, lest he snatch you away, and there be none to deliver you." (*Ps.* xlix. 22.)

3rd POINT. Consider—Jesus Christ is the Sun of Glory, enlightening the saints with the day of a blessed eternity. "He that followeth me, walketh not in darkness;" he shall enjoy the light of grace, which banishes sin. He "shall have the light of life;" that is, the light of glory. This produces in the saints three marvellous effects: a security without fear, a joy without sadness, an eternity without end. For as the great apostle says, "Jesus Christ, who hath destroyed death, and hath brought to light life and incorruption by the gospel" (*Tim.* i. 10.) Thus he is the day of grace, which the royal prophet compares to the morning light: "In the morning I will stand before thee, and will see: because thou art not a God that willest iniquity." (*Ps.* v. 5.) The other is the day of grace and glory, the light whereof is compared to the noonday: "For with thee is the fountain of life; and in thy light we shall see light." (*Ps.* xxxv. 10.) God offers the light of grace to all, but not to all the light of glory. For that day, says St. Athanasius, is for those only who are dead to sin, and who live for the glory and service of God. "The Lord knoweth the days of the undefiled; and their inheritance shall be for ever." (*Ps.* xxxvi 18.) Live in such a manner as to be of that number. Then shall your justice shine as the light, and your judgment as the mid-day sun.

SATURDAY.

On Jesus warning the Jews that they shall die in their sins.

1st POINT. Consider—"Again therefore Jesus said to them: I go, and you shall seek me, and you shall die in your sins." (*John*, viii. 21.) To die in sin is the sovereign evil of man. What greater misfortune than to lose irreparably all good, and endure without remedy all imaginable evil. Death is the destruction of nature, sin that of grace; but to die in sin is the annihilation of all the benefits of nature and grace. Death is the sovereign evil of the body, sin that of the soul; to die in sin is the sovereign, irremediable, and eternal evil of soul and body. The death of the wicked who are surprised in sin is truly miserable, because it is a prelude to eternal reprobation. The tomb of the just man is the bosom of God; the sinner is "buried in hell." (*Luke*, xvii. 22.) The consequences of death, and not the accompanying circumstances, render it either good or evil. The death of the just, being followed by an eternal recompense, is happy; that of the wicked, entailing everlasting punishment, is the completion of misery.

2nd POINT. Consider—the most ordinary and universal cause of so deplorable an evil as that of dying in sin, is resisting the grace of God, and contemning alike the promises and salutary warnings of divine goodness. This appears in the conduct of the Son of God towards the Jews. He enlightened their minds by the knowledge of his divinity: "And he said to them: You are from beneath, I am from above. You are of this world, I am not of this world." (*John*, viii. 23.) "For if you believe not that I am he, you shall die in your sins." (*John*, viii. 24.) He employs the attraction of his love and hope to soften their unbending temper: "If you continue in my word, you shall be my disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth

shall make you free." (*John*, viii. 31, 32.) This once chosen people hardened their hearts against all the efforts of their Saviour. Melancholy image of a soul that forsakes the way of God during life, and whom his mercy abandons to his justice at the hour of death!

3rd Point. Consider—to escape the misfortune of an unhappy end, you must avoid all that usually leads to a contempt of the inspirations of grace. These are sins of malice or long-indulged habits, and violent passions, which obscure even the light of reason. Again, you must never quit prayer and the exercise of good works; or if unhappily you have abandoned, return to them without delay. As God removes from none but those who first fly his presence, be not of the number of whom the prophet speaks, who fly without stopping: "But pray that your flight be not in winter, or on the Sabbath," (*Matt.* xxiv. 20); that is, beware of waiting to fly sin until you are unable to effect your intention. Blush not to return to God, for, as St. Augustin says, being wicked, we have a good Father, to the end we may not persevere in wickedness. Listen to the voice of God addressing you by his prophet: "Return, you rebellious children, and I will heal your rebellions." Answer him: "Behold we come to thee, for thou art the Lord our God." (*Jer.* iii. 22.)

TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

On Jesus restoring Sight to the Man born Blind.

1st Point. Consider—"And Jesus passing by, saw a man who was blind from his birth." (*John*, ix. 1.) All are born blind, because all are born in sin. Original sin has inflicted a spiritual blindness, by obscuring the rays of heaven, and enveloping the dawn of life in the

shadows of death. This primeval stain involves the soul in a fatal gloom, depriving her vision of the sovereign good, and filling it with error and illusion. This blindness is the more deplorable, as it increases with our existence, and human malice makes a personal crime of a hereditary penalty. Darkness is the inseparable companion of sin, because this evil banishes grace, the sun of our spiritual existence; it renders the mind incapable of receiving the light of the Holy Ghost, and leaves it exposed to an infinity of dangers.

2nd Point. Consider—to the Son of God, *the true light*, it appertains to illuminate the spiritually blind. This he effects by shedding on the soul the light of faith, the life of the understanding, as charity is of the heart. He also infuses therein the gift of understanding, to enable her to penetrate the most profound mysteries; of wisdom, which elevates her to the knowledge of things divine; science, which leads to the paths of truth; and counsel, to direct her in all spiritual difficulties. Whilst the mind is enriched by these sacred gifts, and employs them to advantage, it can never be deceived by the illusions of darkness. They are assured guides that lead the predestinate, and distinguish them from the children of the world. Say with St. Augustin, O light invisible, that penetrates the obscurity of the human heart, command thy light to shine on me, that I may behold him who is my true and everlasting life.

3rd Point. Consider—the signal favours which Jesus Christ confers on the blind man. He miraculously heals him, by which favour he is so changed as no longer to be recognized by those who saw him blind. Thus a soul whom God has perfectly enlightened, seems changed into *a new creature in Jesus Christ*. Her ideas, affections, conversation, and entire conduct, are quite contrary to what they had previously been. She acts in a manner much more noble and divine. The Son of God also receives this man into his fold, knowing that the Jews had

cast him out of their synagogue, and as a good pastor, numbers him with his sheep. In fine, he gives him interior light to discover his divine nature, as he has given him physical light to behold his sacred humanity. He can truly say: "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." (*John*, ix. 25.) These words perfectly express the happiness of the saints on earth, and the blessed in heaven. The happiness of the saints on earth is to know only Jesus Christ crucified. This *one thing* comprehends all. The happiness of the saints in heaven is to behold Jesus Christ glorified, and in the unity of this view they say: One thing I know, and in which I find my eternal beatitude.

MONDAY.

On Jesus restoring Sight to the Blind Man. (*Continued.*)

1st Point. Consider—"They said therefore to him: How were thy eyes opened?" (*John*, ix. 10.) The saints have always industriously concealed the particular graces with which God has favoured them, knowing well, that he who carries a treasure in public view, is exposed to the danger of being robbed. Wherefore they choose as the rule of their conduct the sentence of the prophet: "My secret to myself." (*Isaiah*, xxiv. 16.) They are also very reserved when inquiring into the marvellous operations of God in the souls of their neighbour; because the works of God demand respect, and should not be sought into with rash curiosity. Nevertheless, impelled by charity, they sometimes communicate to others the divine mercies in their regard, when this can serve to the edification of their neighbour and the glory of God.

2nd Point. Consider—"He answered: That man

that is called Jesus, made clay and anointed my eyes." (*John*, ix. 11.) He who has drawn forth the universe from the treasury of his power, disdains not to handle the dust from which you are created, to confound your pride, that fears abjection in the exercise of humbling offices in the service of your neighbour. He does so to moderate your vain joy by the remembrance of death, and to repress the vanity that dazzles you if placed in an exalted station. In a word, he thus consoles you, when, by a secret order of his providence, you become an object of contempt in the eyes of men. Then Jesus Christ *spreads clay upon your eyes*, that is, he permits this profound abjection, for your own good and his greater glory. Love, therefore, the humiliation applied by his divine hand, and rejoice that he uses the slime of your baseness, in order to communicate to you his sanctity, and enlighten you with his light.

3rd Point. Consider—"And they said to him: Where is he? He saith: I know not." (*John*, ix. 12.) The Jews demand where the Son of God is, either through vain curiosity, or a hatred that sought his destruction. Love and desire of enjoying his divine presence should make you inquire with the spouse: "Shew me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou liest in the mid-day" (*Cant.* i. 6) of thy infinite charity. If through your negligence he sometimes withdraws, and deprives you of his sweet conversation, sorrow and respect should impel you to seek him with the beloved "about the city, in the streets and broadways," saying to all creatures: "Have you seen him whom my soul loveth?" (*Cant.* iii. 2, 3.) Or with the two disciples: "Master, where dwellest thou?" (*John*, i. 38.) And he will say: "Come and see." (*John*, i. 39.) Come to the crib to learn innocence, simplicity, and poverty. Come to the desert to live in silence and recollection. Come to Calvary to be immolated with me. Come to the altar to be nourished with my flesh and

blood. Enter into yourself, "For lo! the kingdom of God is within you." *Luke*, xvii. 21.)

TUESDAY.

On Jesus restoring Sight to the Blind Man. (*Concluded.*)

1st Point. Consider—"They, therefore, called the man again, that had been blind, and said to him: Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner." (*John*, iv. 24.) The works of Jesus Christ are so marvellous, that his enemies are dazzled with the glory of his miracles, and they pine with envy. Having no other arms but those of falsehood, wherewith to attack him, they say: "This man is not of God, who keepeth not the Sabbath." (*John*, ix. 16.) Not satisfied with destroying themselves by the most horrible blasphemies, they abuse their authority to involve the innocent in their own crime. "Wo to you that call evil good, and good evil: that put darkness for light, and light for darkness: that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter." (*Isaiah*, v. 20.)

2nd Point. Consider—"The man answered, and said to them: Why herein is a wonderful thing that you know not whence he is, and he hath opened my eyes." (*John*, ix. 30.) How admirable the light that appears in the reply of this blind man. But "what sayest thou of him," (*John*, ix. 17.) Christian soul? What idea do you form of his glory and his ignominy, of his virtues and sufferings, his life and death? "What sayest thou" of his mercy in pardoning, his patience in supporting, his longanimity in expecting, and his sweetness in receiving you? "What sayest thou" of his liberality in enriching, his sanctity in purifying, and his justice in correcting you, in order to your eternal salvation? How can you respond, since the graces conferred on

you are innumerable? Wherefore, praise your Saviour with all your strength. Your thanksgiving can never equal his bounty; his goodness surpasses all your praise.

3rd Point. Consider—"And they cast him out." (*John*, ix. 34.) "Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice sake." (*Matt.* v. 10.) The more the world persecutes, the more does God exalt and show forth the virtue of his servants. The Pharisees have no sooner cast forth from their synagogue this zealous disciple of Jesus Christ, than his benign Master comes to console, and discover to him the mystery of his divinity. He demands of him: "Dost thou believe in the Son of God? He answered, and said: Who is he, Lord, that I may believe him? And Jesus said to him: Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee." (*John*, ix. 35, 36, 37.) Happy they who merit to hear these words, and prostrating themselves at his sacred feet adore their Saviour. Beseech his divine clemency that you may be of that number, and ever remain attached to him by an intimate and indissoluble union. Frequently say to your heart: "It is he that talketh with thee," that you may hold yourself in profound recollection and reverence in his sacred presence. You can behold your Lord by the light of prayer during this life; if you are faithful, you shall behold him hereafter in the light of eternal glory.

WEDNESDAY.

On the Judgments of God over the culpably Blind.

1st Point. Consider—"And Jesus said: For judgment I am come into this world, that they who see not, may see: and they who see may become blind." (*John*, ix. 39.) The Son of God, the true sun of justice, desires to shed his rays on your soul, nevertheless, you

may unhappily provoke him to withdraw, and leave you involved in darkness. This will inevitably follow if you oppose obstacles to his grace, or abuse it by presuming on the divine goodness, or on your own strength. It may also occur, that in punishment of your sins, God shall withdraw from you *the light of his countenance.* By a judgment ever most equitable, he withholds his grace from those who place an impediment to its influence, in consequence whereof they fall into a fearful blindness. They go, says St. Augustin, from darkness into darkness, ignorant of the abyss into which they plunge.

2nd Point. Consider—"Therefore God shall send them the operation of error, to believe lying: because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved." (*Thes.* ii. 10.) The evil spirit extends the kingdom of darkness by insinuating himself into the imagination, which he disturbs by images that corrupt the senses and cause objects to appear otherwise than they are in reality. From the imagination he extends his operation to the sensitive appetite, exciting the passions, which, as gross vapours, obscure reason. After establishing his tyranny in the sensitive appetite, he takes possession of the exterior senses, which he deludes with a false view of the riches, pleasures, and honours of the world, proposing the example of the wicked, which, as a torrent, hurries the sinner along. Thus the demon deceives souls; closing all the avenues through which the light of the Holy Ghost could enter, he involves them in the most dreadful blindness.

3rd Point. Consider—"And Jesus said to them: If you were blind, you should not have sins, but now you say: We see. Your sin remaineth." (*John*, ix. 41.) Man is the principle cause of his own blindness, because his enemy cannot injure him but with his own consent. However, by a strange disorder, he takes part with his enemy against himself, and, as St. Bernard remarks, there is nothing more insupportable to the sinner, than

the eye of his own conscience. The cause of this irregular self-hatred, is an attachment to vice, which inflicts on the soul so dangerous a wound, that she falls at last into a reprobate sense. Then prosperity dazzles; vanity, as a thick vapour, darkens the mind; human prudence, by its false maxims, corrupts the judgment. In fine, the most pernicious of the spiritual maladies, is that which proceeds from the contagion of the senses, as these render man incapable of thinking justly on the affairs of his salvation.

O Light eternal, that shinest in unshaded beauty, enlighten the darkness of my heart! O splendour inaccessible, send forth a ray of thy brightness, that I may know thee and know myself! O Light of Truth, shine upon my soul, and inflame it with thy love, that its every thought and sentiment may tend to thee alone.

THURSDAY.

On Jesus choosing the seventy-two Disciples

1st Point. Consider—"And after these things, the Lord appointed also other seventy-two: and he sent them two and two before his face into every city and place whither he himself was come. And he said to them: The harvest indeed is great, but the labourers are few. Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that he send labourers into his harvest." (*Luke*, x. 1, 2.) The Son of God watches with tender solicitude for the salvation of souls. He considers them sometimes as a flock, of which he is the shepherd; sometimes as a harvest, whereof he is Lord. He commands you to pray that he send labourers into his harvest, for they cannot enter but at his call. He requires labourers, not idlers, in his harvest. He also requires that you act by the movement of his spirit, and be ready to

accomplish his will, without regard to the time, place, or manner of your employment. If you choose for yourself, he will leave you to yourself. If you receive all from his hand, he will be your support, and will bless all your labours.

2nd Point. Consider—"He that heareth you, heareth me, and he that despiseth you, despiseth me. And he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me." (*Luke*, x. 16.) How great the respect you owe to those whom Jesus Christ has invested with his own authority. "For Christ, therefore, we are ambassadors, God, as it were, exhorting by us." (2 *Cor.* v. 20.) Accustom yourself to behold God in their persons. Obedience will not be difficult, when you reflect it is God that speaks, and not man. Meditate the reproach of Jesus Christ to those cities that profited not of his miracles and preaching. "Wo to thee Corozain, wo to thee Bethsaida. For if in Tyre and Sidon had been wrought the mighty works that have been wrought in you, they would have done penance long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment, than for you." (*Luke*, x. 13, 14.) Truly you have cause to fear, lest these reproaches and menaces fall upon you, seeing the little fruit you draw from so many graces. "With fear and trembling, work out your salvation." (*Phil.* ii. 12.)

3rd Point. Consider—"And the seventy-two returned with joy, saying: Lord, the devils also are subject to us in thy name." (*Luke*, x. 17.) Having laboured with courage and success, they return with joy to their Divine Master, to render an account, and refer to him the glory of their work. This is a fruit of gratitude and a mark of wisdom. If the faithful servants of God, says St. Gregory, quit his presence for the service of their neighbour, and the functions of an active life, they frequently return to contemplative exercises, in order to repair their spiritual strength. The Holy

Fathers are of opinion, that the joy of the disciples proceeded from secret pride and vain esteem of themselves. St. Leo observes, that the saints justly fear, lest vain glory in their good works should cause God to withdraw his grace and leave them to their natural weakness. The Saviour replies: "I saw Satan like lightning falling from heaven." (*Luke*, x. 18.) Avail yourself of this important warning, when tempted to self-complacency or vain satisfaction in the talents, either natural or supernatural, with which you may be endowed. Say to yourself, the proud have been cast down from heaven, and the humble have been exalted to their seat. If the children of light have not been secure, what may not dust and ashes fear?

FRIDAY.

On the Parable of the Good Samaritan.

1st Point. Consider—"A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers, who also stripped him, and having wounded, went away, leaving him half dead." (*Luke*, x. 30.) The sinner *goes down*, that is, he precipitates himself from the state of grace, unto the gulf of sin. *He falls into the power of the demon*, "who lieth in secret, like a lion in his den." (*Ps.* ix. 9.) The way to Jericho, that is, the path of the world, is filled with the snares of honours, riches, and pleasures, by which sinners are drawn, not only from the safe path, but prevented from returning to God. He is stripped of the priceless garment of grace, so that he may lament with Job: "He hath stripped me of my glory, and hath taken the crown from my head. He hath destroyed me on every side, and I am lost: and he hath taken away my hope, as from a tree that is plucked up." (*Job*, xix. 9, 10.) To conclude, he

is pierced with a mortal wound by the arrow of sin, and *left half dead*, that is, retaining only the life of the senses. The body of the sinner, says St. Ambrose, is the tomb of his unhappy soul.

2nd Point. Consider—"But a certain Samaritan being on his journey, came near to him." (*Luke*, x. 33.) Jesus is this charitable Samaritan, who has exhibited an infinite mercy towards the sinner. He has descended from heaven and assumed the nature of man, in order to come *near him* and heal his wounds. "And going up to him, bound up his wounds" with the bands of charity, "pouring in oil and wine," (*Luke*, x. 34); that is, sanctifying grace and the spirit of compunction. Seeing the sinner weak and languid, he raises him up, bearing in his own sacred person the penalty of sin. He restores him to the church, and recommends him to the ministers of religion to whom he gives knowledge and power to heal his spiritual infirmities, promising to repay them their charitable care with an eternal recompense.

3rd Point. Consider—"And Jesus said to him: Go, and do thou in like manner." (*Luke*, x. 37.) Obey this precept, following the advice of the apostle; and by doing so, "you shall fulfil the law of Christ." (*Gal.* vi. 2.) "Pray one for another, that you may be saved." (*James*, v. 16.) "If a man be overtaken in any fault, you who are spiritual, instruct such a one in the spirit of meekness." (*Gal.* vi. 1.) In a word, render your neighbour, to the utmost of your power, every office of charity which his necessities demand. "This do and thou shalt live." (*Luke*, x. 28.) Heaven is the reward of good works, not of words. Divine love is neither sterile nor inactive; it is beneficent and laborious, adding to precepts, deeds of supererogation. For your own part, beware of *going down from* Jerusalem, that is, attaching your affections to sensible objects. If you would avoid *falling into the snares of your enemies*, let eternity be the

continual subject of your meditations. "My eyes are ever towards the Lord, for he shall pluck my feet out of the snare." (*Ps.* xxiv. 15.)

SATURDAY.

On the Parable of the Rich Man.

1st Point. Consider—"But God said to him: Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee; and where shall those things be which thou hast provided?" (*Luke*, xii. 20.) That good alone can be called solid from which its possessor derives utility. Wherefore, God alone is truly good, since his presence in the soul averts all evil, and confers every benefit. Terrestrial riches, however seemingly good, may injure much, and can serve but little. But the riches you possess in Jesus Christ can never injure; on the contrary, they render you truly happy. He is beatitude itself; he is the completion of all your good, and your preservative from all evil. Do you labour under infirmity?—he is your physician. Do you suffer hunger?—he is the bread of heaven. Are you menaced by death?—he is the source of life. In him you find the remedy of every evil, and the accomplishment of all your desires Divide not the affections of your heart, since in one only good you can find all things.

2nd Point. Consider—the utility of riches consists not in possessing, but in dispensing them to the poor. The more you amass wealth, the more unprofitable it becomes. On the contrary, the treasure you possess in God, is advantageous in proportion as you guard it carefully. The pious soul which often partakes of the adorable eucharist, understands how incalculably precious the time during which she possesses within her bosom the source of inexhaustible riches. Who can

conceive the treasure of graces which this divine guest communicates to the heart that entertains him in silence and recollection. Moreover, God is a general and universal treasure, where all may be enriched, without exciting envy or jealousy, or prejudicing the interest of any. Your happiness will be augmented by the number of those who partake of the blessing. Charity, which unites you in the enjoyment of a common good, redoubles your felicity in beholding that of your brother.

3rd Point. Consider—that only can be esteemed a solid good, which can be loved without disquietude and possessed without danger. Would you be truly rich? —be rich in spirit and eternal goods. If, in order to seek with greater liberty the sovereign good, you have renounced the world and embraced a religious state, give thanks to God for so inestimable a favour. But beware lest inordinate attachment to trifling conveniencies should taint the odour of your sacrifice. Are you engaged in the world?—beware of attachment to riches. If you possess wealth, suffer not your heart to rest therein. If you have but little, be contented therewith. If you are poor, let God be your treasure, look with indifference on the possession or privation of all things else. Conform yourself in all things to the will of your heavenly Father. Beseech him to give or take from you according to his good pleasure; let your only petition be, that he never withdraw himself from you: whilst possessing God you cannot be poor. "I cried to thee, O Lord; I said: Thou art my hope, my portion in the land of the living." (*Ps.* cxli. 6.)

TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

On Jesus curing the Infirm Woman.

1st Point. Consider—"And he was teaching in their synagogue on their Sabbath. And behold there was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years: and she was bowed together, neither could she look upwards at all." (*Luke*, xiii. 10, 11.) The enemy of man endeavours to hold him bowed down to the earth, with chains of sin, self-love, attachment to creatures, and corporal infirmity. Sin draws him down towards hell, where frequent relapses seem to mark his place. Self-love engages him in vain reflections on his own interest or satisfaction. Love of creatures binds him to the earth as a miserable slave. Corporal infirmity is communicated to the mind by a natural sympathy. If the body is weak, the mind becomes languid; if the body suffers, the mind shares in its pain. Have you not felt the weight of these chains? May you not say with the prophet: "I am become miserable, and am bowed down even to the end: I walked sorrowful all the day long." (*Ps.* xxxvii. 7.)

2nd Point. Consider—"Whom, when Jesus saw, he called her unto him, and said to her: Woman, thou art delivered from thy infirmity. And he laid his hands upon her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God." (*Luke*, xiii. 12, 13.) In the person of this woman, admire the means by which the Son of God attracts the hearts of his elect. *He looks upon them* with eyes of mercy. *He calls them.* This call is the voice of infinite love: it is universal, and without exception of persons. "Come to me all you that labour and are burdened." (*Matt.* xi. 28.) How often have you heard this call: "The Master is come and calleth for thee." (*John*, xi. 28.) He calls you to prayer, to treat with you in secret. He calls you to the cross, to suffer for

his love. He calls you to the altar, to enjoy his real presence. He calls you to succour him in the persons of the poor. He calls you to recollection in the solitude of your heart. He calls you to the exercise of your various duties, in order to sanctify and render you like unto himself.

3rd Point. Consider—"And he laid his hands upon her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God." How few there are who give glory to God, and gratefully acknowledge his benefits. "And the ruler of the synagogue (being angry that Jesus had healed on the Sabbath) answering, said to the multitude: Six days there are wherein you ought to work: in them, therefore, come and be healed, and not on the Sabbath-day." (*Luke*, xiii. 14.) How great the malice that conceals its envy and hatred under the appearance of zeal!

To thee alone, O Lord, is praise and honour due. Thy word destroyeth all evil, thy hand hath wrought all good, and in beholding thee, consists the happiness of man. Look upon me, sweet Jesus, and draw my heart towards thee. I am replete with misery, but thou art the exhaustless fountain of mercy. Call me to thee at the hour of my death, that I may praise thee with the saints for all eternity. Amen.

MONDAY.

On Jesus healing the Dropsical Man.

1st Point. Consider—"And it came to pass, when Jesus went into the house of one of the chief of the Pharisees on the Sabbath day to eat bread, that they watched him." (*Luke*, xiv. 1.) Men observe those whom they esteem, to admire them; those whom they love, to conform to their sentiments; and those whom they fear,

to avoid their displeasure. Jesus Christ should be the object of your esteem, because his perfections are infinite. Therefore observe attentively all his actions, that you may admire and adore him. He should be the only object of your love, because he is the supreme good. He should also be the object of your fear, because his judgments are inscrutable. Observe all the dispositions of his will, that you may not incur his displeasure, and pray that he would vouchsafe to observe, in order to chastise and correct you in this life, either by himself or his creatures, that he may pardon you in eternity. "Prove me, O God, and know my heart: examine me, and know my paths. And see if there be in me the way of iniquity; and lead me in the eternal way." (*Ps.* cxxxviii. 23, 24.)

2nd Point. Consider—"And behold, there was a certain man before him that had the dropsy." (*Luke*, xiv. 2.) Your soul also labours under this malady, which proceeds from self-love, that excites an insatiable thirst for honours, riches, and pleasures. The remedy of this is to be found only in Jesus Christ; his humility is the medicine of our pride. You must drink the cup of salutary bitterness presented by the hand of your Saviour His example and his grace will qualify the ungrateful draught. How could a sinner harbour pride in the presence of a God humbled to the death of the cross? The poverty of Jesus Christ is the cure of your avarice. Riches enkindle a thirst they can never satiate. "The rich have wanted, and have suffered hunger." (*Ps.* xxxiii. 11.) He alone can heal this malady, who made himself poor that you might become rich. Approach him, for he is the fountain of living water, who satisfies all that drink of his vivifying streams. The sanctity of Jesus purifies the corruption of nature. His precious blood, when received with humility and confidence, produces in the soul a burning love and desire to possess Jesus Christ alone.

3rd Point. Consider—"And Jesus answering, spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying: Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath-day? But they held their peace. But he taking him, healed him, and sent him away." (*Luke*, xiv. 3, 4.) Happy he whom *Jesus takes*, and who reciprocally draws his Saviour into his heart. Why do you so many times resist his sweet attractions? Why prefer nothingness to the sovereign good? "He taking him healed him." All is vivifying in the person of Jesus Christ; his hand, his word, his look: wherefore present yourself frequently to him in the sacred mysteries, the source of immortality. "He healed him and sent him away." Our Lord permits but for a short time to enjoy his amiable presence, because during this life divine consolations are transitory. Therefore he leaves you but a moment on Thabor, to taste the sweetness of his love, and immediately summonses you to Calvary to share in the bitterness of the cross. He discovers himself to you in prayer, and you will say with the spouse: "I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him: and I will not let him go," (*Cant.* iii. 4); but in a moment he disappears again. This trial, however, is only a privation of his sweetness, not of the strength and unction of his grace.

TUESDAY.

On the Parable of the Good Shepherd.

1st Point. Consider—"And he spoke to them this parable, saying: What man of you that hath an hundred sheep: and if he shall lose one of them, doth he not leave the ninety-nine in the desert, and go after that which was lost, until he find it." (*Luke*, xv. 3, 4.) To accomplish the will of his heavenly Father was the motive that drew the Son of God down from heaven to

seek the strayed sheep, that is, the sinner. Zeal for the salvation of souls, says St. Gregory, is the most acceptable sacrifice you can offer to the Omnipotent. How indefatigable should you be to lead them in the path to heaven. At least, beware of losing a single one of those whose salvation is entrusted to your vigilance, labour, and fidelity. Alas! how few can say with Jesus Christ: "Of them whom thou hast given me, I have not lost any one." (*John*, xviii. 9.) How many souls may be lost through your want of fervour, your immortification or bad example. What will be your sentiments in this regard at the hour of death, when you shall have to render an account, not only for your own soul, but also for the souls of your brethren?

2nd Point. Consider—at what price the only begotten of the Father has redeemed the soul of man. For this he descended from the eternal throne, embraced a life of humiliation and sorrow, which he terminated amidst ignominy and torture. Compare your cold indifference with the intense desire which Jesus Christ has manifested for the salvation of souls. To that end he has devoted an entire life of labour: and you will not relinquish a vain amusement, a trifling gratification, for an object so glorious. The Son of God sheds the last drop of his blood amidst torments and opprobrium; and you think it too much to devote an hour's space to console and encourage the afflicted or dying, to instruct the ignorant, or draw a sinner to God. The least inconvenience or opposition suffices to chill your zeal; you make little account of that which the Son of God valued more than the blood he shed for it, and which he esteemed a recompense for all his labours.

3rd Point. Consider—the excess of charity which the Son of God exhibits in the redemption of man. The sinner flies from him, and he pursues. The sinner insults him, and despises his invitations; the Son of God

expects and awaits his re-appearance; the first sigh of the sinner reaches the heart of his Saviour, who receives him in his arms, presses him to his bosom, and calls on the angels of heaven to participate in his joy, because he has found the "sheep that was lost." Whence such love for an enemy, such patience towards an ungrateful criminal? In your extreme misery alone can be found the cause of his inconceivable mercy. The Lord is admirable in all his works, but his mercies are above them all.

O God of my salvation! how can I respond to such infinite love? What can I offer in thanksgiving for thy innumerable graces? Give me a new heart capable of loving thee; form in my mind sentiments worthy of thyself; and impart to my lips the praises of an eternal gratitude.

WEDNESDAY.

On the Parable of the Prodigal Son.

1st Point. Consider—"And he said: A certain man had two sons; and the younger of them said to his father: Father, give me the portion of substance that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his substance. And not many days after, the younger son gathering all together, went abroad into a far country, and there wasted his substance, living riotously." (*Luke*, xv. 11, 12, 13.) The prodigal child, that is, the sinner, commences his unhappy fall by quitting the place he had occupied in the heart of his heavenly Father. He withdraws from the remembrance of his sacred presence, in order to sin with more liberty. He abandons the divine protection, and having departed from the asylum of innocence and peace, is immediately environed with enemies, that is, with passions which torment, and make

him feel how *bitter* it is to have *forsaken* his God. He casts off the paternal guidance, and severely feels that the eye of Providence is closed on those who contemn his laws, and that they are no longer the object of his tender solicitude. In fine, having dishonoured the divine image impressed on his being, all union with his God is broken, except the chain by which his justice holds the reprobate.

2nd Point. Consider—when the sinner separates himself from God, he leaves his Father's house, that is, he is deprived of the place destined for him in the heavenly mansion. His name is blotted from the book of life, and his crown is awarded to another. The character of grace is effaced from his soul; his former virtues and merits are all covered with the veil of oblivion. Because the sinner has dishonoured God, he is buried in eternal ignominy. He has forgotten the divine benefits; therefore are his services no longer remembered. When the sinner casts off the fear of God, like the prodigal child he loses his heavenly inheritance. All who forsake the path of justice shall perish eternally. "I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned the judgments of thy justice. I will keep thy justifications. O! do not thou utterly forsake me." (*Ps.* cxviii. 7, 8.)

3rd Point. Consider—whether you, like the prodigal child, have *wasted your substance*. What use do you make of the talents, natural or supernatural, which are the portion assigned you by your heavenly Father? Forgetfulness of God is the distant country to which the prodigal withdrew. Do you not accompany him thither? Do you not merit the reproach: "My people hath forgotten my days without number?" (*Jer.* ii. 32.) Ah! how many days and hours do you pass unmindful of your Father and your God! But the just man holds himself always in the divine presence. The hunger which the prodigal suffers is consequent on the priva-

tion of the divine word, and sterility in virtue. You endure a similar hunger, because spiritual reading seems tedious, and you love not prayer. The *husks* on which the sinner would feed, are the maxims of the world, in which he expects to find a sordid satisfaction. But *no one gave him*, for the appetite of passion is increased by every sin. So long as you are at a distance from God, you are a miserable slave, occupied in *feeding swine*, that is, your sensual inclinations. Is such an employment worthy an immortal soul? Can you find happiness in removing from the Sovereign Good?

THURSDAY.

On the Return of the Prodigal Child.

1st Point. Consider—"And returning to himself, he said: How many hired servants in my father's house abound with bread, and I here perish with hunger? I will arise, and will go to my father, and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee: I am not worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants." (*Luke*, xv. 17, 18, 19.) The sinner commences his return to God by reflecting on his miserable condition. Affliction causes him to enter into himself, as prosperity had made him forgetful alike of God and his own salvation. If your soul is in a state less wretched than that of the prodigal, at least you are bound to aim at the perfection of your state of life, from which you are still far removed. Examine, therefore, what is wanting to you in fervour, humility, patience, or charity. Endeavour to be sensible of your indigence, and esteem it a mark of the divine love, that he permit you to find neither repose nor consolation in any created object.

2nd Point. Consider—"I will arise, and will go to

my Father." Such are the sentiments and holy resolutions of the sinner who discovers his fault, and the precipice into which he is fallen. Though ingratitude and disobedience render him unworthy, nevertheless he confidently hopes that paternal affection and tenderness will plead his cause, and ensure him forgiveness. You also have many times said: "I will arise," but you have as often forgotten, because you did not form the resolution with fervour. Say now, in the sincerity of your heart, "I will arise" from such an evil custom, such an indulgence of the senses, of pride, or impatience: "I will arise" to fervour in my spiritual duties, and to an increased zeal for all that can advance my perfection and salvation.

3rd Point. Consider—"And rising up he came to his father." (*Luke*, xv. 20) Promptitude and fervour mark the return of the truly penitent sinner. He defers not a moment the execution of his purposes. "Father," he says, "I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight." His confession is sincere; his sorrow is intense, and proceeding from the purest filial love. "I am not worthy to be called thy son" His tender affection excites a deep confusion, and lively indignation against himself. "Make me as one of thy hired servants." It rests with yourself, not only to be received amongst the servants of your heavenly Father, but to be admitted even to the rank of his child. Imitate the repentance of the prodigal; like him enter into yourself; bewail the past years so ill employed; weep your offences with tears of bitter compunction; confess them with sorrow and humility; offer condign penance, without sparing or flattering self-love; and let the remembrance of the past render you more faithful for the future!

O Lord Jesus Christ, true Father of my soul! let the compassion of thy own sacred heart plead for thy unworthy child. Graciously receive me into the number of thy servants, and grant that by future fervour I may atone for the lateness of my return to thy service.

FRIDAY.

On the Father receiving his Prodigal Son.

1st Point. Consider—"And when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and was moved with compassion, and running to him fell upon his neck and kissed him." (*Luke*, xv. 20.) Having meditated the fall and repentance of the prodigal son, consider now the bounty of the tender father. He looks upon him while afar off. If his heavenly father had not cast on him a ray of his mercy, never could he have risen from the darkness and confusion into which sin had plunged him. "My iniquities have overtaken me, and I was not able to see," says the Royal Prophet. And again: "My heart is troubled, my strength hath left me, and the light of my eyes itself is not with me." (*Ps.* xxxvii.) The father beholds in his unhappy child only the melancholy wreck of vice; but he is a father! and his bowels of compassion yearn to relieve the misery he cannot endure to behold. He embraces, and imparts to him the kiss of peace and love. Instead of overwhelming him with his anger, he pours upon him the excess of his mercy. The ardour of paternal love closes his eyes against the offences of his child Is there here any room for despair? Any pretext to colour a false apprehension? Is it cause of fear to behold a father embrace his son, and hide the enormity of his guilt in the paternal bosom? Who would not abandon himself with entire confidence to the mercy of such a father? And who would again separate from him who had received him with so unspeakable a tenderness?

2nd Point. Consider—"And the father said to the servants: Bring forth quickly the first robe, and put it upon him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet." (*Luke*, xv. 22.) Not content with pardoning, and receiving with joy his prodigal child, the father restores

him to his former dignity. In the prodigal meditate the fatal consequences of sin. It despoils of all the gifts of heaven, and overwhelms you with spiritual poverty and misery. What must be your fate, if you had not a father as liberal in restoring with advantage the graces you had lost, as you have been prodigal in dissipating them. Admire his noble generosity to the sinner who returns humble and contrite in heart. The *first robe* with which he clothes him is sanctifying grace, by which he becomes the child of God. The ring is the image of Jesus Christ, and the seal of the Divine Spirit, with his gifts and infused virtues. The shoes denote a facility in walking in the ways of God, the restoration of merits, and the practice of good works. After considering this example of infinite mercy, will you still defer your repentance? will you refuse to quit sin, to renounce your evil habits? Will you not return to such a father?

3rd Point. Consider—"And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat and make merry: Because this my son was dead, and is come to life again: was lost, and is found." (*Luke*, xv. 23, 24.) How great the joy testified by this good father for the return of his son! How invincible the strength of paternal love! However wicked or ungrateful the child, the father's heart retains its wonted sentiments. Thus your heavenly Father rejoices when you return to him by repentance. He comes to meet you, he embraces and restores to you all the ornaments of grace. He prepares for you a festival of rejoicing, where he nourishes you with his own most precious body and blood, which is daily immolated and served at the eucharistic table. Ah! be no longer ungrateful. Will you prefer the slavery of sin to the dignity of a child of God?

SATURDAY.

On the Parable of the Prodigal. (*Concluded.*)

1st Point. Consider—"But he said to him: Son, thou art always with me." (*Luke*, xv. 31.) Behold the first advantage of a true religious; he is always with God. Do you suppose that God is indebted to you for entering his house, and consecrating yourself by the vow of obedience to his service; on the contrary he has in this conferred on you an unspeakable honour. Say not therefore in the language of complaint: "Behold, for so many years do I serve thee, and I have never transgressed thy commandment, and yet thou hast never given me a kid to make merry with my friends." (*Luke*, xv 29.) If in effect you have served him so long, you cannot say he has given you nothing. For your perseverance in his service is an inestimable favour. As you cannot of yourself form the desire of good, neither can you accomplish it without the divine succour. The hand that raised, must sustain you by its power. To the true religious is given grace to fall more rarely, to rise more promptly, and to persevere more constantly. Give thanks for this favour, and beseech him by the bowels of his mercy to continue with you until death. This is to commence on earth the everlasting happiness of heaven.

2nd Point. Consider—"But he said to him: Son, thou art always with me, and all I have is thine." (*Luke*, xv. 31.) Behold the portion of a true religious, and the second advantage of his state. Evangelic poverty is a treasure which renders him rich in the gifts of heaven, in proportion as he is despoiled of those of the earth. O blessed exchange, to relinquish all in order to gain all. To give himself without reserve to God, that God may become entirely his. Happy the children whose portion is the love of their heavenly

Father. Thrice happy they who ground their happiness on his grace and favour, and endeavour to cultivate it with vigilance and care.

3rd Point. Consider—"But it was fit that we should make merry and be glad, for this thy brother was dead, and is come to life again: he was lost, and is found." (*Luke*, xv. 32.) Behold the third advantage of the fervent religious. He envies not the consolations which divine goodness imparts to his brethren, nor the favours conferred on them, much less those worldly joys which he has renounced by the vow of chastity. All his joy consists in pleasing and loving God; all his ambition is to draw the hearts of men to the divine service. His only desire is to see sinners converted, and sin banished from the earth. The desire of glorifying God makes all the crosses and mortifications of religious life sweet, and he says with the prophet: "I will sing to the Lord as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have any being. Let my speech be acceptable to him: but I will take delight in the Lord. Let sinners be consumed out of the earth, and the unjust, so that they be no more: O my soul, bless thou the Lord." (*Ps.* ciii. 33, 34, 35.)

MEDITATIONS

FOR

THE FESTIVALS OF THE SAINTS.

DECEMBER.

SAINT FRANCIS XAVIER.

(3rd December.)

1st Point. Consider—"What will it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" (*Matt.* xvi. 26.) The serious meditation of this oracle, pronounced by Eternal Truth, disabused of the illusions of a vain world the great Apostle of the Indies. Born with an exalted genius and extraordinary capacity for all the sciences, he opened his young heart to the influence of an ambition that was fanned by hopes the most brilliant; but no sooner had the light of heaven discovered to him the vanity of his projects, no sooner had the divine maxim, "What will it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" struck upon the generous soul of Xavier, than he understood that all human glory is but a fleeting mist, all earthly riches but a frail and perishable possession, which death must inevitably snatch away, and that eternal goods, and eternal greatness alone can satisfy a heart infinite

in its requirements and its desires. Then did the holy folly of the cross appear to our Saint the only treasure worthy of being sought for; and thenceforth abjection, labours, sufferings, and sacrifices became the object of his most ardent aspirations. How touching, how persuasive this example! And why do not I also recognise the nothingness of everything temporal? Why is not my heart, like that of our Saint, detached from all that is futile and fleeting? I exist only to work out my salvation; whatever would distract me from that all-important end, or even that which does not hold in view its eventual attainment, is only deserving of sovereign contempt.

2nd Point. Consider—the unhesitating fidelity with which St. Francis Xavier obeys the interior grace that repeated in his soul these words: "What will it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" With noble disdain he bursts the bonds in which a deceitful world sought to lead him captive, and this first was but a prelude to the many sacrifices which his fervour promptly inspired. Resolved to immolate every human inclination, he plunged the sword of mortification into the inmost recesses of his heart. Hitherto he had loved the vain applause of men—now he seeks and prizes only their contempt; the desire of worldly splendour had allured him—he prostrates that idol by devoting himself to voluntary and perpetual poverty; haughtiness and a spirit of independence formed his characteristic trait—and he enchains the pride of human intellect and will by the vow of obedience, to which sacred engagement, like his divine Prototype, he was faithful "unto death." If I would walk in the path which this perfect imitator of a crucified Saviour has trodden, and, like him, ensure my right to the heavenly inheritance, I also must combat my most cherished inclinations, and erect the edifice of my sanctification on the destruction of every human passion.

3rd Point. Consider—the means by which our passions must be subdued. If pride be your dominant inclination, seek obscurity—desire to be forgotten by all creatures, or embrace whatever may lower you in their esteem. If levity and dissipation draw your mind and heart from God, you must guard strictly your senses, and rein your imagination by recollection of the divine presence; or if a love of ease and desire of your own convenience be your impelling propensity, you must daily exercise that penitential spirit which distinguished all the Saints; in a word, you must immolate your entire being to God with generous devotedness. The idea of such a universal sacrifice causes nature to shudder; but by this alone can you ensure the crown of eternal glory, or even in the present life possess that solid peace and interior joy which God is wont to impart to the faithful soul, and which immeasurably exceeds whatever delight the honours or pleasures of this world can bestow. Form now your resolutions. In your colloquy give thanks to Jesus Christ for the singular graces with which he rewarded the fidelity of our Saint; implore, through his intercession, the light that dispels every illusion of pride, and the victorious fortitude, by which, triumphing over yourself, you will present to God the undivided affections of your heart.

O blessed Apostle of the East! great St. Francis Xavier! whose zeal for the divine glory embraced alike with unrelenting ardour your own most perfect sanctification, and the salvation of every soul for whom the precious blood of Christ was poured forth, vouchsafe to obtain, that my heart, like to thine, may be deeply and efficaciously impressed with the important maxim, "What will it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

(8th December.)

1st PRELUDE—Imagine you behold the beloved disciple, accompanied by all those who never lost their baptismal innocence, offering to the Virgin the tribute of their filial homage and affection.

2nd PRELUDE—Imagine you behold Magdalen at the foot of the cross, surrounded by all true penitents, offering the tribute of her tears and condolence to the Mother of Sorrows in her desolation. Join that group to which conscience tells you that you belong, and present to the Queen of Virgins, as an offering to her divine Son, either the fervour of your first charity, or the heartfelt tribute of your penitential love.

1st POINT. Consider—that next to the glory conferred upon our nature by its union with the Eternal Word, the greatest perfection and elevation it received was in the person of the Blessed Virgin. Her inconceivable dignity as Mother of God, her unsullied purity, and the holiness with which she was adorned, furnish a subject for our profound homage and admiration; whilst the virtues by which she was so pre-eminently distinguished, and which originated in these august endowments, present a most impressive lesson for our instruction and imitation. The faith which assented so promptly and generously to the most stupendous of mysteries; the humility with which she accepted the dignity of Mother of God, without even a venial fault of self-complacency, and the perfect oblation of her entire being, which had no limits but the will of him who required it, are not less practically instructive to her faithful followers on earth, than they are glorious to God.

Though of all the human race Mary alone enjoyed

the privilege of exemption from original sin, yet it was in the power of each of us to preserve our baptismal innocence, and thereby honour her shrine on this day by a gift worthy of the present festival. Is such the offering which you present on this occasion? Do you honour the Mother of Purity by the tribute of an immaculate heart? Does conscience tell you that you deserve to be numbered amongst those cherished favourites of the Virgin, who never stained their baptismal robe? Or, are you that leprous child who has no claim on her regard or compassion but the evils that disfigure you, and the miseries under which you groan? Is it because sin has rendered you an object too loathsome for any other eye to look upon, or any other heart to endure, that you turn for succour and consolation to the maternal heart of Mary, which is never closed to the supplication of the sinner? If so, whilst you bewail your tepidity, honour her by a noble confidence in her mercy; rest assured that the Refuge of Sinners wants neither power nor will to obtain for you the grace of true contrition and the pardon of all your sins. She who disdained not to be the companion of Magdalen, will also become your constant guardian and protector, if you be faithful in invoking her intercession. Yield not then to the despondency of self-love, or the repining of secret pride; but rather imitate that generous repentance which finds in the sacred heart of Jesus an atonement for every offence, a pledge of every grace and the model of every virtue; and look upon the immaculate heart of Mary as the medium through whom her divine Son may be addressed, and rendered propitious in your regard.

2nd Point. Consider—how admirable the wisdom of Divine Providence, in preparing the person of the Blessed Virgin by those favours to become the living temple of the Incarnate Word. How worthy of the Holy One that no shade of imperfection should dishonour the

dwelling of his choice, that no stain of sin should sully the breast on which he was to repose! Reflect that the person of the religious is also a temple specially consecrated to Jesus Christ; that although none but Mary could aspire to that intimate union with him which was the privilege of her maternity, every religious may, and ought, constantly aspire to a worthy union with her Divine Spouse in the Holy Communion, and should diligently employ all the means necessary for so desirable an end, namely, the purification of the heart from every vicious inclination, mortification of the senses, and detachment from creatures and self-will.

3rd POINT. Consider—that the Blessed Virgin was prepared to become, by these divine favours, not only the temple of the Incarnate Word, but the victim of fraternal charity; fitting her at the same time for the joys of her maternity in Bethlehem, and the sorrows of her martyrdom on Calvary. As a Christian you are destined not only to bear in your bosom the Incarnate Word, but to honour and to serve him in the persons of the poor. You become the associate of the Mother of Sorrows when you sympathize with the suffering members of her Divine Son, and it will be more or less in your power to succour and relieve them, as you endeavour to imitate her example by advancing in the perfection of the state to which you have been called. Such a correspondence with divine grace will not only enable you to sweeten the chalice of suffering for others, but accept it with resignation when presented to yourself. Conclude with acts of thanksgiving to the Blessed Virgin, and resolutions of future fidelity.

SAINT THOMAS, APOSTLE.

(21st December.)

1st Point. Consider—"Now Thomas, one of the twelve, who is called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said to him: We have seen the Lord But he said to them: Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe." (*John*, xx. 25.) According to the wise man, it is imprudent to believe lightly; but to prefer one's own opinion to the assertion of persons worthy of credit is obstinacy. In matters of faith, unless you believe you shall not understand. The blessed behold in heaven only that which they believed on earth. Why, says St. Chrysologus, does Thomas demand this proof? Why does he incredulously scrutinize those wounds which his divine Master had generously received for his salvation? It is that this compassionate Lord, who supports with invincible meekness the incredulity of his disciple, may draw therefrom an infallible support for our faith. Enter into your own heart, and examine whether your faith in Jesus Christ is manifested in your actions. Shun especially all adherence to your own judgment; willingly yield to the opinion of others. To adhere pertinaciously to your own judgment, when reason demands submission, is always the mark of a proud and obstinate mind.

2nd Point. Consider—"Put in thy finger hither, and see my hands; and bring hither thy hand, and put it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing." (*John*, xx. 27.) The Saviour's charity condescends to the weakness of the disciple. He does for Thomas alone that which he had already done to confirm the faith of all; because every soul is dear to him, since for each he has laid down his life. The servant should

seek his master, the sick man his physician; yet the charity of the Redeemer prevents his disciple. "Thou shalt call me and I will answer thee: to the work of thy hands thou shalt reach out thy right hand. Thou indeed hast numbered my steps, but spare my sins." (*Job*, xiv. 15, 16.) For I hope that thy mercy shall triumph over thy justice.

3rd Point. Consider—"Thomas answered, and said to him: My Lord and my God." (*John*, xx. 28.) The apostle pronounces these words with profound sorrow for his infidelity: he confesses his offence by acknowledging Jesus Christ for his *Lord* and his *God*. You also should pronounce them in a spirit of compunction and humility, acknowledging yourself unworthy of appearing in the presence of him who taketh away the sins of the world, and who has retained even in his glorified body those sacred wounds through which alone the sinner can find mercy. When you visit the most Holy Sacrament, or receive the Bread of Life, pronounce those words: "My Lord and my God," with a lively faith in the real presence of Jesus Christ, a profound gratitude for his innumerable benefits, and an unbounded confidence in his infinite mercy. These words breathe a divine unction to him who loves the Word and not the world, nor the things of the world. (*Imit.* b. iii. c. 34.)

O Eternal Word! deign to enlighten my mind and inflame my will. Grant that I may love thee, and centre in thee all the desires of my heart; cleaving to thee with all the powers of my soul, for thou alone art "My Lord and my God."

SAINT STEPHEN, PROTO-MARTYR.

(26th December.)

1st Point. Consider—"And he said: Behold I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God." (*Acts*, vii. 55.) To what humiliation has the Son of God descended in order to exalt you to heavenly glory. Raise your eyes to that eternal kingdom now opened to you, as it was to St. Stephen. To the humiliation of your infant Saviour you owe this inestimable benefit. All the glory of the saints has been purchased by his opprobrium, their exaltation by his annihilation, their beatitude by his sufferings. Do you believe this truth? Do you hope that in virtue of his labours and humiliations you shall one day enter that kingdom where he has prepared for you an eternal recompense? If such is your firm persuasion, how should you love this divine Infant who has loved you so much as to descend from the throne of his majesty to be born in a stable, in order to raise you to a participation of his glory? Beseech the Virgin Mother to obtain for you grace to glorify the name of her Divine Son.

2nd Point. Consider—"The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away." (*Matt.* xi 12.) Penetrate this truth by the light of faith. St. Stephen gained this kingdom only by the effusion of his blood. He traced for you the way, being the first amongst the disciples of Jesus Christ who had the glory of suffering martyrdom. If you would walk in his footsteps, by aspiring to perfection, dispose yourself to encounter humiliation, contradiction, and pain of mind or body, with a generous perseverance. These crosses are precious graces when faithfully corresponded with. With what disposition do you receive them? How do you co-operate with the merciful

Providence that ordains them for your sanctification? By what means will you endeavour to render them more profitable?

3rd Point. Consider—"Be thou faithful until death, and I will give thee the crown of life." (*Apoc.* ii. 10.) This life is a perpetual combat and martyrdom; death a victory, a crown of eternal life. Behold in St. Stephen an example of the Christian's warfare. He combated with the arms of hope. The prospect of eternal goods inspires a contempt for all that is temporal. "You took with joy the being stript of your goods, knowing that you have a better and a lasting substance. Do not therefore lose your confidence, which hath a great reward." (*Heb.* x. 34, 35.) "For he that shall save his life, shall lose it: and he that shall lose his life for my sake, shall find it." (*Luke*, xvii. 33.) St. Stephen combated with the arms of patience. Remember that you fight under the standard of the Son of God. Wherefore, be not wearied with suffering. Your pains will pass, but the joy of the victory shall continue for eternity. He combated with the arms of charity and prayer, pardoning his enemies, and rendering good for evil. Through charity, St. Stephen prayed for his enemies, and obtained that Saul, from being his persecutor on earth, should become his companion in eternal glory.

O faithful disciple of divine love! who breathed forth thy soul in ardent prayer for thy most implacable enemies, obtain for me grace to follow in that path of charity which leads to eternal life.

SAINT JOHN, EVANGELIST.

(27th December.)

1st Point. Consider—that the peculiar love by which Jesus Christ distinguished St. John was the reward of his eminent purity. "He that loveth cleanness of heart, for the grace of his lips shall have the King for his friend," (*Prov.* xxii. 11,) that is to say, Jesus Christ, who is the unspotted mirror and source of purity. Imitate this great Saint if you desire to be the friend of the Incarnate Word. Love and cultivate the angelic virtue of purity. Examine carefully what is to be corrected regarding your senses, your thoughts, words, and actions, your whole demeanour. The more you cherish purity the nearer you shall approach the Sun of Justice, who will shed upon you more abundantly the rays of his grace, by which you will be enlightened to understand his heavenly maxims, and excited to a desire of practising what they enjoin.

2nd Point. Consider—three infinitely precious gifts which the Son of God confers on his beloved disciple His heart—making him the depository of his secret mysteries and heir of all the treasures of his wisdom His cross—constituting him companion of his sufferings and inheritor of all the treasures of his grace. His mother—substituting him in his own place, with promise of participation in all the treasures of his glory. Reflect on the inestimable value of these gifts. Behold this beloved disciple reposing on that bosom which is the seat of wisdom and the science of God. From this source of light he draws the gift of knowledge to penetrate the mysteries of the temporal and eternal generation of the Divine Word. Beseech him to obtain you an entrance into the sacred heart of Jesus, and with him to repose on the breast of your Divine Master. Jesus enters your heart in the Holy Communion; and

at the same time he opens his to you as an asylum of peace in affliction, an oracle in your doubts, as the centre of repose in all your labours. Beseech this Divine Saviour to hide you in the bosom of his Providence, and so strictly unite your heart to his, that they may never be separated.

3rd Point. Consider—the value and excellence of the other gifts St. John received, standing under the cross. There he drank of the chalice which Jesus Christ had predicted to him, and suffered a martyrdom more glorious, as its interior pangs were more acute than the wound inflicted by the tyrant's sword. There also our Lord appointed him his heir, and substituted him in his own place as son to his Blessed Mother, and representative of all the predestinate, who are the adoptive children of that Virgin Mother. Wherefore he was endowed with the prerogatives of all the saints, being a prophet, apostle, evangelist, martyr, doctor, confessor, and virgin; thus entering into all their rights, and in their name taking possession of those blessings which Jesus Christ bequeathed them as his brethren, and the adoptive children of his Immaculate Mother. Acknowledge with lively gratitude your obligations to this great Saint, beseeching him to commend you to the mercy of Jesus Christ, and the protection of the ever holy Virgin. Reanimate all your sentiments of reverence and devotion towards this charitable Mediatrix, and resolve henceforth to serve her Divine Son with renewed fervour and fidelity.

O blessed Apostle! I humbly congratulate thee on thy happiness, and the dignity to which thou art exalted as first of the adoptive children of Mary. Remember, I beseech thee, that in thy person I also was commended to the same most clement Mother, and obtain for me that filial affection for her, and imitation of thy virtues, that will gain for me a share in her maternal love. Amen.

HOLY INNOCENTS.

(28th December.)

1st Point. Consider—"An angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph, saying: Arise, and take the child and his mother, and fly into Egypt." (*Matt.* ii. 13.) Jesus Christ flies, to give you a signal example of obedience. He exposes himself to the sufferings of a painful and tedious exile, voluntarily abandoning himself to the conduct of St. Joseph; sacrificing his judgment, his will, and all the powers of his soul, in order to execute the commands of his Eternal Father. Is it thus you resign yourself to the disposition of Divine Providence? Do you behold God in the persons of those who command in his name? Are you willing to sacrifice your own inclinations to the perfect accomplishment of the will of your Heavenly Father? Beseech your Infant Saviour who, at his entrance into Egypt, cast its idols to the ground, that he would also, on entering your heart in the Holy Communion, destroy the idol of self-will, and establish therein the law of his love.

2nd Point. Consider—"Then Herod, perceiving that he was deluded by the wise men, was exceeding angry: and sending, killed all the men-children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the borders thereof." (*Matt.* ii. 16.) The Son of God in dying takes the place of sinners; but at his birth yields his own place to these innocent victims. They die for Jesus Christ, and in his stead. These little lambs precede their Pastor in the combat of his dolorous passion, though not in the possession of his beatitude. If then they go before, how is it that "they follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." (*Apoc.* xiv. 4.) They precede him in dying, they follow him in rising to eternal glory, where the charity of Jesus Christ prepares for them a recompense proportioned to the suffering inflicted on them by

the tyrant. Do you inquire what have they done to merit such a recompense? This glory which they could not merit before enjoying the privilege of reason and free will, is due to the cause of their death, and the majesty of him for whom their blood was shed. Fear not then to suffer in the service of so good a master, since no evil can befal those who are faithful to his law; neither can any happiness be expected by those who are so base as to offend him.

3rd Point. Consider—"Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremias the Prophet, saying: *A voice in Rama was heard, lamentation and great mourning: Rachel bewailing her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.*" (*Matt.* ii. 17.) The heart of Jesus suffers a martyrdom of sorrow in each of these innocent victims; whilst he offers to his Eternal Father those tender flowers, trodden down by the tyrant's fury, as the first fruits of that precious blood with which he will one day fertilize the whole earth. The cruelty of Herod, in persecuting those infant martyrs, obtains for them a recompense munificent as the charity of him in whose cause they suffer. Wherefore be not surprised that God permits the innocent to be persecuted: he permits it to draw thence his own greater glory, and their greater good: he permits it for the encouragement of timid souls, and to animate the weak in the practice of virtue.

God of clemency! whose glory those innocent martyrs have proclaimed, not in words, but by the effusion of their blood, grant us grace to mortify our passions and vices; to the end that the purity of our lives may be a continual testimony of the faith which our lips profess.

JANUARY.

SAINT ANTHONY, ABBOT.

(17th January.)

1st Point. Consider—how those words of the Gospel: "If thou wilt be perfect, go, sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have a treasure in heaven; and come follow me," (*Matt.* xix. 21,) were to St. Anthony as a torch discovering the true riches of heavenly wisdom, and guiding his steps in the path of Christian perfection. Obedience to the divine word will ever lead the faithful soul to eminent sanctity; for it will discover, and at the same time inspire aversion for all her defects. The rays of the sun show forth innumerable atoms before imperceptible. Examine your actions in the brightness of the evangelic light, you will perceive many imperfections to humble, whilst they excite to vigilance in effacing those stains from your soul. The divine word also discovers the beauty, and inspires a love of virtue. Humility, modesty, charity, purity, and all virtues, like flowers of paradise, immediately appear wherever the light of the Gospel shines. Finally, it imparts sweetness and strength to tread the path of perfection with gladness. Wherefore it is compared to the manna of the desert, which possessed every variety of taste. It consoles in sadness, calms the trouble of the heart, and heals its wounds. In a word, it fortifies in temptation, and is a resource in every necessity.

2nd Point. Consider—"The Lord conducted the just man by right ways, and shewed him the kingdom of God." (*Wisdom*, x. 10.) At the first invitation of Jesus Christ, St. Anthony quitted all things, and withdrew into the desert, whence he came forth but once during his life; and that in the days of persecution, to

encourage the martyrs, and seek for himself the martyr's crown. But, disappointed in the latter, he returned into solitude to combat the world, the flesh, and the devil, and die to himself by a voluntary martyrdom. This he accomplished by the exercise of humility, penance, and prayer. How true are those words of Isaiah: "The way of the just is right, the path of the just is right to walk in, and in the way of thy judgments, O Lord, we have patiently waited for thee: thy name and thy remembrance are the desire of the soul My soul hath desired thee in the night: yea, and with my spirit within me in the morning early I will watch to thee. When thou shalt do judgments on the earth, the inhabitants of the world shall learn justice." (*Isaiah*, xxvi. 7, 8, 9.)

3rd Point. Consider—"And a path and a way shall be there, and it shall be called the holy way." (*Isaiah*, xxxv. 8.) St. Anthony, by faithful obedience to the voice of Jesus Christ, not only attained the summit of perfection, but also became the glorious model of the eremitical and monastic life to innumerable souls who have followed his illustrious example. Meditate those excellent maxims of evangelic perfection which shine forth in his life and precepts. In order to arrive at perfection, imagine each day you then enter on the service of God, and that it may perhaps be the last day of your life. The demon fears nothing so much as the prayers and mortifications of the faithful, and their fervent love for Jesus Christ. Humility is the greatest of miracles. He that esteems nothing but God, never loses peace of mind. Confidence in God, and absolute dependence on his holy Providence, renders a man almost omnipotent. "Blessed is the man whom thou shalt instruct, O Lord; and shalt teach him out of thy law." (*Ps.* xciii. 12.)

SAINT AGNES, VIRGIN AND MARTYR.

(21st January.)

1st Point. Consider—"Strength and beauty are her clothing, and she shall laugh in the latter day." (*Prov.* xxxi. 25.) How admirably illustrated in St. Agnes is this portrait of female perfection, delineated by the inspired writer. In the weakness of her sex and tenderness of her age, Jesus Christ exhibits to the world the strength of his grace and love. The divine fire that glowed within her heart rendered her triumphant over the fiend-like artifice and violence with which she was assailed, and so nerved her against every impression of the fear or love of creatures, that neither the unsheathed sword of the executioner, nor the flattering caresses of her worldly friends and admirers, could for a moment daunt her invincible resolution. When will the love of your crucified Jesus give you courage to support the trifling difficulties you may have to encounter in his service? When will that divine love change in your regard all that gratifies nature into gall and bitterness?

2nd Point. Consider—"With thy comeliness and thy beauty set out, proceed prosperously and reign." (*Ps.* xliv. 5.) Jesus Christ has adorned his spouse not only with strength, but also with beauty. We speak not of the frail flower of corporeal beauty which she heroically despised, but of the lustre of those admirable virtues with which her soul was embellished. Fervour in the divine service, zeal in publishing, by the shedding of her blood, the praises of her Heavenly Spouse, and fidelity in obeying his inspirations, were qualities which far eclipsed, says St. Ambrose, the temporal advantages with which she was endowed. "My beloved is white and ruddy." (*Cant.* v. 10.) White by the splendour of purity; red by the patient endurance of suffering. Are

you faithful in exercising those virtues in the daily opportunities which your duties present?

3rd Point. Consider—"She shall laugh in the latter day." Jesus Christ has changed for his spouse the ignominy of torments into a crown of joy and glory. Abandoned to all the malice of hell, she turns with filial confidence to that omnipotent Being whose power no creature can resist, beseeching him who is the strength of the weak, to be her protection against the evils with which she is surrounded. The prayer of faith and confidence prostrated the power of her enemies, and preserved inviolate her virginal sanctity. Exulting with joy, this incomparable saint, bowing her head beneath the sword of the tyrant, exclaimed: "I give thee thanks, O Father of my Lord Jesus Christ, my protector and my deliverer! my faith has not been in vain; my hope has not been disappointed. I now see that which I believed; I hold that which I hoped for; I embrace the only object of my desires. My lips shall sing thy praise, O Father Omnipotent! and glorify thee in eternity with thy Son and the Holy Ghost. Amen."

THE CONVERSION OF SAINT PAUL.

(25th January.)

1st Point. Consider—these words of Jesus Christ: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" (*Acts*, ix. 4,) and meditate the extent of his mercy, and the efficacy of his grace, in the conversion of St. Paul. Divine goodness seems to require no other motive for clemency towards men, than the multitude and malice of their crimes. The Apostle of nations says: "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the chief." (1 *Tim.* i. 15.) "But I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief." (1 *Tim.* i. 13.) By this expression the Apostle, far from excusing,

rather exaggerates his fault; as if he would say: I was so blinded as neither to discover my own malice, nor recognise my Saviour. Wherefore God, when my salvation seemed desperate, exhibited in me the excess of his mercy. In effect, St. Paul held a prominent position amongst those for whom our Lord prayed with his expiring breath: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." (*Luke*, xxiii. 34.) Shun, therefore, all distrust in his ineffable goodness; but beware of abusing his mercies, lest you fill up the measure of your reprobation.

2nd POINT. Consider—in the words of St. Paul: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (*Acts*, ix. 6,) the model of a perfect conversion. Words, says St. Bernard, short, but copious, efficacious, worthy of ascending before the throne of the Most High. They express an unreserved devotedness, a firm determination to observe with fidelity the law of God. How few attain so elevated a degree of obedience! How few so perfectly immolate self-will as to renounce entirely their own desires, and seek on all occasions the will of God alone! "What wilt thou have me to do?" How omnipotent is divine grace, which at the same moment prostrates and raises up, strikes with blindness and imparts light! Through the influence of that heavenly grace, from a furious lion breathing only carnage, Saul becomes a meek lamb; from a cruel persecutor thirsting for Christian blood, he is instantly changed into a zealous apostle of Christianity. The victorious grace of Jesus Christ triumphs over hearts the most obdurate. During this mortal life, observes St. Leo, we should not despair of any sinner, but hope and pray for the repentance of all, through the clemency of him who raises up the fallen, unbinds the captive, and gives light to "them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death." (*Luke*, i. 79.)

3rd POINT. Consider—the eulogium on St. Paul pro-

nounced by the lips of Eternal Truth: "This man is to me a vessel of election, to carry my name before the gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel" (*Acts*, ix. 15.) Divine grace having wrought the conversion of St. Paul, he becomes an instrument of the same mercy for the conversion of the world. To this glorious end he consecrated all his labours and sufferings whilst on earth, and from the throne of immortal glory to which he is exalted in the heavenly mansion, he ceases not to watch over this cherished object; still promoting by his prayers and by the influence of his heaven-inspired doctrine, the salvation of souls redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. The church celebrates the commemoration of his admirable conversion, because, as St. Bernard remarks, the sinner thence conceives the hope of pardon, which excites to penitential deeds; and he who is already penitent finds therein a perfect model of every virtue. Learn from this great Apostle an ardent zeal for the salvation of souls. But in order to become an efficient instrument of divine mercy towards others, you must in the first instance labour unremittingly for your own sanctification, and always exercise the virtue of zeal under the guidance of the divine will, declared through the voice of his vicegerent, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

SAINT FRANCIS DE SALES.

(29th January.)

1st Point. Consider—"He that shall do and teach he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." (*Matt.* v. 19.) In St. Francis de Sales is discernible both these marks of predestination to supereminent glory. His doctrine is an oracle of the Church in these latter ages, and his life a perfect illustration of that doctrine. St. Augustin observes, that fidelity in little things is an

exercise of great virtue. In this our Saint was peculiarly eminent. Guided by the light of the Holy Ghost, he penetrated and examined even the least movement of his heart, not being able to endure the slightest imperfection in his actions, designs, or affections. His horror of the least fault was commensurate with his love of virtue, even those virtues ordinarily called little, but which great souls esteem most precious; either because the frequent occasions of such acts give continual opportunities of amassing a treasure of merit, or because those virtues, not attracting attention and admiration, are sheltered from the wind of vanity, which often prostrates the cedar of Libanus.

2nd Point. Consider—the faith of St. Francis de Sales was accompanied with a certainty and heavenly suavity which seemed to resemble the light of glory. He beheld the truths and mysteries of religion with an eye so simple, pure, and animated, as excited inexplicable ardour and delight; but the effect of which remained in the centre of his soul: this he called the sanctuary of God, whence all else was excluded. His confidence in God was immovable: never did he seem more secure of succeeding in the most difficult enterprises, never did he enjoy more interior peace amidst danger, than when deprived of all human support; for then he reposed on the protection of Divine Providence with the tranquillity of a child on the bosom of its mother. His was a soul the most generous and courageous in supporting the labours, and pursuing the enterprises which God inspired: his maxim was, boldly to encounter any difficulty rather than abandon any affair committed to his charge.

3rd Point. Consider—charity in its twofold branches may be deemed the characteristic virtue of St. Francis de Sales. That divine fire so consumed every imperfect feeling in his heart, as to leave no other sentiments than those of tenderness for even the most obdurate sinners;

of meekness towards the greatest enemies; and profound respect towards all mankind, in whom he beheld only the image of God. The sole motive of the divine will animated all his actions; and he desired nothing in heaven or on earth but the perfect accomplishment of that adorable will. The humility which enhanced all the virtues of St. Francis de Sales, rendered him as little in his own eyes as he was great before God and man. Never did he affect any singularity, or seek those actions that dazzle the eyes of men, who behold only the exterior. He trod the ordinary path of virtue, but in a manner so divine that nothing appeared more admirable than the union of sublimity and simplicity through the whole tenor of his life. This great master of spiritual life was a living portrait of that meekness and humility to which Jesus Christ exhorted his disciples. By humility he lived hidden in the greatness of God, whose glory he sought in all his actions: by meekness he gained irresistible entrance into every heart. Those united virtues rendered him master of his own, and imparted an equanimity of mind and imperturbable repose. Study well this divine lesson; and at least let humility supply the want of other virtues. Whilst you preserve humility, you cannot lose peace of soul.

FEBRUARY.

SAINT BRIDGET, VIRGIN AND ABBESS,

FOUNDRESS OF RELIGIOUS WOMEN IN IRELAND.

(1st February.)

1st Point. Consider—how the God of our fathers having pre-elected St. Bridget to be at once the foundress and model of that long and venerable line of con

secrated virgins whose sanctity has shed a lustre on the Church of Ireland, adorned her with all the virtues, and particularly with the heroic zeal, which her exalted vocation required. That zeal embraced in the first instance her own most perfect sanctification. Having, with profound contempt for all that is merely terrestrial, renounced the splendour attendant on her noble birth, she, with generous devotedness, assumed a life of poverty and humiliation for love of him whose abjection she prized beyond all the dignities of the world. In the retirement of a monastery she dedicated her days to the study and practice of those holy rules prescribed by our glorious Apostle, St Patrick, to guide her and her spiritual children in the path of religious perfection. If the Spouse of Virgins has also deigned to call you to the sublime graces and duties of religious life, what are your efforts to emulate the virtues of St. Bridget? Does an ardent desire of perfection animate your every action? Do you cultivate interior solitude by assiduous recollection, and for this end exercise unremitting vigilance over your senses? Do you in every instance make the rules of your holy institute your guiding principle? Would you be a degenerate child of so blessed a mother? Resolve, then, to copy in your soul a portrait of her virtues, particularly that interior spirit without which not only you can never effect your own sanctification, but exterior works of charity will prove at once profitless to their object and a snare for your own destruction.

2nd Point. Consider—how our Saint, impelled by zeal to advance the kingdom of Christ, devoted herself with unwearying ardour to the instruction of youth, and by her indefatigable exertions, based on an enlightened and active faith that purity of morals by which the daughters of Ireland have ever been characterised. Your vocation requires you to continue and perpetuate this hallowed work, commenced by St.

Bridget and her first associates. Do you deeply meditate its dignity, importance, and awful responsibility? With what zeal do you seek to advance in the interior virtues, and avail of every exterior means that will qualify you to become, in the hand of the Sovereign Zealot, an efficient instrument for the most divine of all divine works—the salvation of souls redeemed by the precious blood of a God Man? Are you willing, with the Apostle of Nations, to spend yourself and be spent in the service of those little ones for whom Christ laid down his life? Do you endeavour, by fervent and persevering prayer, to draw down the blessing of heaven not only on your own labours, but on those of the pastors whose duty it is continually to guard and defend the flock against the wily serpent and the ravening wolf.

3rd Point. Consider—how the pure and ardent zeal that burned in the heart of St. Bridget rendered her a worthy medium of the blessings of Providence to every child of affliction. She was a mother to the orphan, a nurse to the sick, a refuge to the desolate; she poured the balm of consolation into the crushed heart of sorrow; she ministered to the stranger and distressed wayfarer: in fine, she was the faithful imitator of him who "went about doing good to all." (*Acts*, x. 38.) The interior law of charity which animated those heroic deeds, together with the similar holy duties, have descended to you as an inheritance from the Saints who have anteceded you: they preserved the religious spirit in all its vigour and purity, even through ages of unexampled persecution; whilst in secret they mourned over the seeming extinction of those pious functions, the revival of which it is your happiness to behold. Let gratitude for this priceless blessing be manifested in your zeal to preserve and transmit to those who shall succeed you the same interior spirit in all its perfection. Beware, lest in the discharge of the external functions of charity, self-grati-

fication, vanity, or human respect mar the odour of the sacrifice; but let a spirit of faith, and the virtues that ever follow in its train, insure the approval of "him who seeth in secret," (*Matt.* vi. 4,) and who will himself "be thy reward exceeding great."

SAINT IGNATIUS, BISHOP AND MARTYR.

(6th February.)

1st Point. Consider—how admirably the words of the Spouse: "Place me as a seal upon thy heart; as a seal upon thy arm, for love is strong as death," (*Cant.* viii. 6,) are illustrated in the life and death of the glorious martyr, St. Ignatius. It is recorded that he is the child whom our Lord, embracing, placed amidst his Apostles, saying: "Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, he is the greater in the kingdom of heaven." (*Matt.* xviii. 4.) Doubtless, then was imprinted on the heart of the Saint that adorable Name which after his death appeared in letters of gold. The love which that name enkindled within his breast was evinced in the ardour and frequency with which he gave it utterance. He preferred the title of priest of Jesus Christ to all the dignities offered him by the emperor, adding, that he would esteem himself but too much honoured in immolating his life for the glory of his Divine Master. Thus the sacred Name of Jesus is a Name of humility and love; it can only penetrate hearts animated with these virtues. Be humble as a little child if you desire the love of Jesus. Love Jesus if you would be humble. Let his adorable Name be frequently on your lips—it breathes a heavenly sweetness; enshrine it in your heart—it is the source of joy.

2nd Point. Consider—again those words: "Place me as a seal upon thy heart; as a seal upon thy arm."

The adorable Name of Jesus being enshrined in the heart of St. Ignatius, was the animating principle not only of his thoughts, affections, and desires, but also of his actions, all of which bore the impress of that seal of love. That invincible Name was the buckler with which he repelled the fiery shafts of the evil one, who unceasingly strove to traverse his labours. With that all-conquering Name, as with a burning arrow, he penetrated hearts, offering them as trophies of love to his Divine Master. From that heaven-descended Name, as from a celestial torch, he drew the lights for governing his Church, and extending the conquests of the Prince of the Apostles. The adorable Name of Jesus is a sun dissipating the darkness of sin, and ever in movement to bring forth the fruits of virtue. Judge by your works whether it is their vivifying principle; by these you must prove your love and devotion to the most Holy Name of Jesus.

3rd POINT. Consider—"Love is strong as death." The adorable Name of Jesus not only dwelt in the heart and animated the actions of St. Ignatius, it also inspired him with an ardent desire of sufferings and death. Of this he gave a glorious manifestation, when exposed to the fury of wild beasts in the Roman Amphitheatre. There, with a countenance beaming with triumphant joy, he exclaimed, "O Jesus! I am thy wheat, wherefore I must be ground by the teeth of those beasts, that I may be presented as bread at thy heavenly table" In imitation of this glorious martyr and devoted lover of our adorable Redeemer, endeavour to impress the sweet and saving Name of Jesus on your heart and on your hand, to the end your every thought and action may be consecrated to his honour and glory.

SAINT SCHOLASTICA, VIRGIN.

(10th February.)

"Who will give me the wings of the dove, and I will fly and be at rest."—(*Ps.* liv. 7.)

1st Point. Consider—St. Scholastica had the qualities of the dove, under the figure of which St. Benedict saw her soul fly into heaven. 1. The dove loves cleanliness, and cannot suffer filth. St. Scholastica, from her tenderest infancy, had an extreme horror of sin, and of all that could sully the purity of her innocence. She often said that those who truly loved God could have no earthly love. 2. The dove chooses the hollows of the rock, and willingly abides in solitude. St. Scholastica loved to hide herself in the sacred wounds of Jesus Christ. They were to her a resting-place and the source of her happiness; and she used to say that one look at the crucifix would efface all the ills of this life. 3. The dove is amiable for her simplicity and sweetness; she has no venom in her, and, as St. Cyprian says, she does not use her beak to strike or tear. And thus our Saint was sincere in her words, simple and guileless in her thoughts, the declared enemy of slander, duplicity, and of all that could wound charity, or disturb the peace of her neighbour. She had consecrated her heart to the pure love of Jesus Christ, and her lips to his praises. For all else she kept a religious silence, and her maxim was, that as no worldly subjects are worth speaking of, we should either speak of God or keep silence. Even to her brother, St. Benedict, whose rule she had embraced, she spoke but once in the year. When the soul descends to converse with creatures, she says many things; but when she rises to her God, one word suffices. Or, to explain better, she is silent, and wrapt in contemplation, because God is ineffable, and

surpasses all our discourses. Those who make rapid progress in virtue speak little; those who speak much advance little. 4. In fine, the dove is sweetly perfumed, and, by the good odour it diffuses around, draws many others. And thus, also, this admirable spouse of Jesus Christ, being embalmed with his sacred virtues, whose name is as oil poured abroad, has drawn an innumerable multitude of virgins to his service, and still continues to attract them by her prayers and the memory of her heroic virtues. Happy they who follow her example, and advance rapidly in the path to perfection under her guidance and protection!

2nd Point. Consider—St. Scholastica had the two wings of the dove, with which she elevated herself to the highest degree of pure love. The first is continual prayer; the second, universal mortification. The rule of St. Benedict, which she followed exactly, strictly enjoins both the one and the other; and, not content with drawing souls to a moderate detachment from creatures, it requires even a total separation from all earthly things, in order that God may be their all and their portion for ever. The means, says St. Denis, to obtain divine love—or rather that love which is God himself—is to quit the world and rise above the senses, in order to find that which passes all material things in an ineffable degree; to rise above ourselves and come out of our own nothingness, that we may find God, who is the source of our being, and happily lose ourselves in the abyss of his goodness. You complain that you have little love for God. Be not astonished at yourself: it is because you neither pray nor practise mortification.

3rd Point. Consider—that St. Scholastica had the flight of the dove, and her repose. Both the spirit and heart of the just man have their flight and elevation to God. The flight of the spirit is to contemplate the beauty of God; that of the heart is to love him. The flight of the spirit is to have a high esteem of his great-

ness; that of the heart to humble itself before him The flight of the spirit is to have tender sentiments for his goodness; that of the heart to attach itself to him. The flight of the spirit is to penetrate the judgments of God; that of the heart to submit to and fear them. In fine, the flight of the spirit is to form an excellent idea of his infinite perfections; that of the heart to love and imitate them. But it must be remarked that, during the course of this life, the flight of the spirit is weak, and cannot arrive at perfect repose no more than that of the heart. Death must set the soul at liberty, and then she will take flight towards her centre, where she will repose in unalterable peace. The spirit enters into the light of glory; the heart into the joy of the Lord. It was thus that St. Benedict saw fly that dear dove to the highest heavens, where she is high among the blessed. Pray to her to bring you after her by a faithful imitation of her virtues.

SAINT MATHIAS, APOSTLE.

(24th February.)

1st Point. Consider— how meetly the words of the Prophet: "Behold my servant, I will uphold him, my elect, my soul delighteth in him," (*Isaiah*, xlii. 1,) may be applied to St. Mathias, whose election to the apostleship was in a twofold sense holy. Holy in those by whom he was chosen; they were the apostles and disciples of Jesus Christ, assembled under St. Peter, the visible head of the Church who unanimously selected St. Mathias, and Joseph, surnamed the Just, on account of his eminent sanctity. With no interest in view but the glory of God, nor reliance than on his divine providence, they addressed their earnest supplications to the Supreme Ruler of all human destinies, beseeching

him to manifest which he had appointed to fill the place of Judas "And praying they said: Thou, Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen." (*Acts*, i. 24) This election was also holy in the person elected. Piety rendered him worthy the dignity to which he was elevated. St Laurence Justinian remarks, that St. Mathias merited to govern the people of God and rank amongst the princes of the Church, because he had acquired a perfect empire over his own heart. He only who can control himself shall lead others with security.

2nd Point. Consider—the election of St. Mathias was a divine appointment, and so strongly marked with the finger of God, that St. Peter might say to the assembled disciples what Samuel said to the people of Israel when Saul was appointed king: "Surely you see him whom the Lord hath chosen." (1 *Kings*, x. 24.) The Son of God would not appoint Mathias to the apostleship before his Ascension, to demonstrate that from the throne of his Majesty he still disposes all human events according to his sovereign will. He would thus authorize the economy established in his Church, over which he ever presides by a special providence. He would have the humble Mathias elected by the Apostles, who were themselves lowly and humble, to teach us that humility is necessary alike for superiors and subjects; for superiors whom he appoints to govern in his own place, that they may fulfil their office with meekness; and for subjects, that they may obey with alacrity and perfection.

3rd Point. Consider—the election of St. Mathias was most happy and advantageous for the Church; the eternal and increated Wisdom having presided at his election, liberally imparted to him every grace requisite for discharging in the most perfect manner, and with abundant fruit, all apostolic functions. Having added innumerable souls to the evangelic kingdom within the

confines of Judea, he sought a more extensive field for his zeal; and having generously combated the ignorance and cruelty of barbarians, he crowned the splendour of his conquests with the glory of martyrdom. How should this illustrious example animate the zeal of those consecrated to the continuation of the same ministry of mercy and love! How will it condemn those who are unfaithful to so noble a calling! Implore our blessed Apostle to obtain for you the double spirit of your vocation; that you may labour effectually for your own sanctification, whilst you devote yourself with zeal to the salvation of your neighbour; that thus, like him, you may fulfil the counsel of the wise man: "In all thy works keep the pre-eminence." (*Eccle.* xxxiii. 23.)

MARCH.

SAINT THOMAS OF AQUIN, DOCTOR.

(7th March.)

1st Point. Consider—"And I saw an angel standing in the sun." (*Apoc.* xix. 17.) In the court of the Celestial King, according to the word of the Incarnate Wisdom, all the blessed shall be as the angels of God; and even in this life man should emulate the sanctity of those heavenly spirits with whom he hopes to be co-partner in eternal bliss. As amongst the spirits created to minister before the throne of the Most High, there are found distinguishing degrees of excellence, so it is amongst men, who, all inheriting the same frail nature, yet present the widest variety of virtue and merit. In the ranks of those who have attained the most eminent degree of sanctity on earth, and corresponding glory in heaven, stands the name of St. Thomas, whose instruc-

tions and example, as a sun, continue to diffuse the light of knowledge and warmth of devotion over the universal Church. Do you desire to partake in his happiness? Imitate his humility, and like him you shall be great in the eyes of God. Emulate the purity of angels, and you shall have a place amongst those heavenly spirits.

2nd Point. Consider—in the angelic doctor is exhibited the qualities and virtues of the angel mentioned in the vision of the beloved disciple. His life was an uninterrupted progress towards perfection. This Saint, as a celestial sphere, warmed into devotion a world from which he remained perfectly detached. In fine, he applied himself with entire devotedness to accomplish the duties assigned by Providence; was a model of exactitude to monastic rules and observances, and vigilant and laborious in promoting the salvation of his neighbour. Review your conduct and actions in this bright mirror.

3rd Point. Consider—in the virtues of St. Thomas you may trace a living image of the perfections of all the angelic host. Like the seraphim he glowed with love that breathed but the glory of the Incarnate Word, the honor of the adorable Sacrament, and most tender devotion to the holy Mother of God. He possessed the divine science of the cherubim, as his writings amply testify. The wisdom with which his soul was endowed made him seem as the thrones immutable in sanctity. By continual and universal mortification he acquired over his passions the empire of the dominations and principalities. He was animated with zeal, like the powers and virtues. In charity, meekness, and humility, he resembled the angels and archangels. Beseech this illustrious guide in the path of salvation, to impress on your heart his favourite maxims, namely—a Christian without prayer is a soldier without arms. Can a sinner, the enemy of God, enjoy a moment's tranquillity?

It is preposterous in one who has renounced the world to occupy his mind on any subject but such as tends directly to the service of God Salvation is attainable by all who will it with sincerity of heart.

SAINT FRANCES, WIDOW.

(9th March.)

1st Point. Consider—"Our conversation is in heaven." (*Phil.* iii. 20.) In the admirable life of St. Frances shone forth all those virtues which should adorn either the secular or religious state. So uninterrupted was her prayer, it might be said she had quitted this terrestrial world to make paradise her ordinary dwelling. The sacred Passion of Jesus Christ was the subject of her continual meditation. In his wounds she imbibed that spirit of compunction and love of the cross which caused her to loathe all that the world seeks and values. The adorable heart of her Saviour was the living fountain whence she drew the pure stream of heavenly delights which flow abundantly into souls that desire not the troubled waters of Egypt. The mystery of love, the Eucharistic Bread, was her delicious nourishment, and, after receiving this heavenly manna, she was frequently favoured with those ecstasies and revelations with which the history of her life abounds. You also, as a Christian, still more as a religious, being a citizen of the heavenly Jerusalem, should ever dwell there in heart and mind, and tread with persevering fidelity the path of that holy law which leads to your celestial home, lest the chastisement of your folly be an eternal exile.

2nd Point. Consider—in St. Frances a model of that devotion which all should entertain towards their guardian angel. By faithful co-operation with the care of this tutelar spirit, she purified her soul from even the

least defects, and attained to an heroic practice of the most eminent virtues What are your efforts to profit of similar aid? What your gratitude to the King of angels for having assigned you as guardian a prince of his heavenly court? Have you respected the presence of this blessed spirit, and been obedient to all his inspirations? You must devoutly commune with the angels of God during this life, if you desire to enjoy their society in the world to come.

3rd Point. Consider—the admirable virtues exercised by St. Frances in the duties of her exalted station. By an invincible meekness, a forbearing and preventing suavity, she preserved the most perfect domestic harmony during the forty years of her married life. Although solitude and prayer were her delight, she instantly relinquished their sweet enjoyment when called to the active duties of her state. Her principal solicitude was to impress on the opening minds of her children such sentiments of piety as would render them ornaments of Christian society here, and dispose them for the society of the blessed hereafter. To her domestics she was a kind and compassionate mother. She liberally assisted the indigent, and served the sick with all the tenderness of charity. No injury could elicit a complaint or excite the least resentment in her heart. In fine, so ardent was her spirit of penance that it was necessary to restrain her austerities within the bounds of evangelic prudence. Examine your life in the brightness of this mirror, and implore, through the intercession of St. Frances, those graces necessary for a perfect imitation of her virtues.

SAINT JOHN OF GOD, CONFESSOR.

(11th March.)

1st Point. Consider—"Hath not God chosen the poor in this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which God hath promised to them that love him?" (*James*, ii. 5.) St. John of God was poor according to this world, but charity made him rich in the sight of Eternal Truth. In exercising that divine virtue he acquired a threefold and priceless treasure: the treasure of sanctity, the treasure of sufferings, and the treasure of glory. The laborious charity of the Saint amassed a treasure of sanctity, by the practice of all those virtues which works of mercy to the suffering members of Jesus Christ continually elicit. Having consecrated himself to the service of the poor—in whom, with the eye of faith, he contemplated him who being rich made himself poor for the love of us—he laboured in this sacred vocation with such untiring zeal as rendered him a fitting instrument of divine goodness for the institution of a religious Order, the blessings of which extend throughout the Church, even to the present time. Faithful correspondence with the first graces of his vocation was the foundation of the eminent sanctity of this Saint. What has been your correspondence with the many graces and inspirations with which you have been favoured?

2nd Point. Consider—the intense charity of St. John obtained for him the treasure of sufferings, which he endured with fortitude invincible alike to the malice of men and fury of demons. He received injuries as favours; prayer was his only defence against the violence of his enemies; the sweet name of Jesus as an all-healing balm, soothed his every affliction. He was indeed his own most inexorable persecutor; and whilst he poured forth all the sweetness of charity on his neigh-

bour, he reserved for himself all the rigour of austerity. Wherefore our divine Saviour vouchsafed to crown him with the thorny diadem which distinguishes his elect ones. When shall you say with sincerity of heart, "Lord, thy thorns are my roses, thy sufferings my paradise?"

3rd POINT. Consider—the perseverant charity of this illustrious Saint acquired for him a treasure of glory. This treasure is no other than God himself, who being the essential charity, is also, in the infinitude of his goodness, its everlasting recompense. On the day of general retribution Jesus Christ will assign to those who have ministered to him in the persons of the poor, the most exalted places in the heavenly kingdom, which he has promised to all who love him. To those will he singularly declare: "As long as you did it to these my least brethren, you did it to me. Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." (*Matt.* xxv. 40, 34.) Should you not, then, esteem it a special privilege to assist the poor, to visit hospitals and prisons, minister to the sick, or console the afflicted, since it is to Jesus Christ himself you render these services in the persons of his suffering members?

SAINT GREGORY THE GREAT.

(12th March.)

1st POINT. Consider—St. Gregory, whom heaven selected to rule the people of God, like the valiant leader of the hosts of Israel, "was great according to his name; very great for the saving the elect of God." (*Eccle.* xlvi. 1, 2.) Humility and patience, the characteristic traits of Incarnate Charity, rendered him a great

Saint and glorious instrument of a redeeming God for the salvation of innumerable souls. Those sister virtues are indispensably requisite in all who are called to labour not only for their own sanctification, but also for the salvation of their brethren. In order to attain an elevated degree of sanctity, it is necessary to lay a deep foundation of humility, the only solid support of every other virtue. To convert the sinner and lead souls to God, demands an invincible patience, since he that would produce great fruit in the vineyard of Jesus Christ, must prepare to encounter every difficulty, to endure every suffering.

2nd Point. Consider—in the spirit and exercise of unbounded charity, St. Gregory was the true imitator, the worthy representative of the Sovereign Pastor of souls. He embraced within the bosom of his paternal solicitude the necessities of his entire flock, that is, the universal Church of Jesus Christ. He was the support of the needy, the consoler of the afflicted, the protector of pious institutions; above all, his zeal was manifested in providing pastors of truly apostolic spirit to guide the faithful, and lead into the fold of the Divine Shepherd the nations that lay buried in the darkness of infidelity.

3rd Point. Consider—a love of prayer, the source and channel of every grace, was a distinguishing virtue in the character of St. Gregory. In that school of the Divine Spirit he studied the science of the saints. Job inquires, "Where is wisdom to be found?" (*Job*, xxviii 12.) St. Gregory could reply with Solomon, that he had found it in his oratory; that it was the fruit of prayer.

This great Pope devoted himself assiduously to prayer, spiritual reading, and meditation. For this purpose, whilst yet in the flower of his age, he renounced the dignities and caresses of the world to entomb himself in the solitude of a monastery. There, absorbed in heavenly contemplation, his mind soared above all that is

visible and perishable, to make invisible and eternal goods the only object of his pursuit. Such were the virtues that sanctified St. Gregory; the same, if practised with perseverance, will also ensure your sanctification.

SAINT PATRICK,

APOSTLE AND PATRON OF IRELAND.

(17th March.)

PRELUDE.—Imagine that you behold the entire Irish people prostrate before the shrine of our great national patron, St. Patrick. Among them, the priesthood and the religious orders encircle the sanctuary; the members of each institute renewing their vows, presenting the emblematic gifts received at their profession, and resolving henceforth to honour Almighty God and their great apostle, by faithfully copying those traits of his sanctity that are most appropriate to their state.

1st POINT. Consider—the heroic manner in which St. Patrick proved his love of God by devotedness to the divine will, and the faithful performance of that will when manifested to him. The love of that will soothed and endeared all the sorrows and sufferings of his captivity, and prompted him to zeal and generosity in action, which no perils could intimidate, no labours exhaust, no sufferings subdue, no sacrifices abate. Abandonment to the divine will in suffering of every kind, whether mental or physical, and courageous and faithful execution of it when manifested to us, furnish the most certain proofs of our being animated by the spirit of charity. Be grateful to God that in the guidance of superiors you have an infallible means of ful-

filling his will, and that by the sincere and cordial practice of obedience you will hear from this source the words of Christ, as certainly as Mary did who reposed at his feet; for he himself declares: 'He who hears you, hears me." (*Luke*, x. 16.)

2nd Point. Consider—that prayer was the principal source from which St. Patrick drew his spirit of charity. Even during the labours and distractions of his missionary career, whilst instructing an entire people in the mysteries of Faith, and training up a clergy for them, he combined the contemplative spirit of an ascetic with the active zeal of an apostle. Although you cannot devote the same time to prayer which he did, nor enjoy that external solitude to which occasionally he had recourse, it is perfectly in your power not only to become an eminent saint, but to attain the highest sanctity to which God has called you, by the punctual and fervent use of the time apportioned to prayer, by incessantly cultivating a spirit of recollection, which will procure for you the privilege of mental solitude, and by a great love and diligent application to the exercise of your spiritual retreats, when the period allotted to them arrives.

3rd Point. Consider—the glorious example which your great patron presents for your imitation in the exercise of the second branch of this virtue, namely, fraternal charity. It was not only the sacrifice of home and family, of the pleasures and honours of the world, the privations, labours, and perils he encountered in the course of his apostolical career; but the remarkable fact that he endured all this for a people from whom he received the severest injuries ever inflicted on him. They had torn him at an early age from the bosom of his own family and the land of his birth, and consigned him to the rigours of an ignominious captivity!

And what was the secret of this heroic charity? He

looked upon them all with the eye of Faith as the children of his Heavenly Father, and his heart yearned to make them his brethren in Christ. In the variety of objects and characters which present themselves for the exercise of your charity, there must be some calculated to excite natural repugnance, if not aversion, either from their infirmity or your own; some perhaps who may repay your services with ingratitude or injury; and some who may exhibit no improvement after your spiritual labours. Learn that the most perfect exercise of charity is to be found in the services which you render to such persons; that you should be particularly grateful to Almighty God when he gives you an opportunity of serving a person who has injured you, and that even the slightest sacrifices we make in bearing the defects and infirmities of others, have great value before God.

Every difficulty and obstacle to the practice of this virtue must vanish if you look upon such persons with the eye of Faith. And surely, when standing by the bed of suffering, and listening to the outpouring of a breaking heart, to which all but the ear of charity is deaf—bringing back the wearied and bleeding wanderer to the fold—raising the fallen—opening an asylum for the desolate and abandoned—wiping away the tears of virtue itself, condemned also to suffer in this vale of sorrows—you can have little difficulty in recalling the example of your holy patron.

Conclude with a firm resolution to imitate your national patron in these traits, and to cherish increased devotion to him.

SAINT JOSEPH,

SPOUSE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

(19th March.)

1st Point. Consider—the sublime and singular graces conferred on the glorious St. Joseph, who was chosen, amongst all the sons of men, to be spouse of the Virgin Mother of God, and to hold on earth the place of the Eternal Father towards his Incarnate Son. By a special providence was he named Joseph, which signifies *he who believeth;* and such was his faith as to exalt him above all who were most venerable in the ancient law. He excelled Abraham in fidelity, Isaac in obedience, Jacob in patient labour. And if an extraordinary sanctity prepared him for his august destiny, to what consummate perfection did he not attain in the intimate society not only of the holiest of all pure creatures, but of the Incarnate Wisdom and Sanctity of God? Congratulate our Saint on those privileged relations with Jesus and Mary. Your devotion to the Son and the Mother will also be the measure of your perfection. Earnestly implore this devotion through the intercession of St. Joseph, and pray that, like him, you may constantly advance in virtue and merit, until called to the crown prepared for you in the kingdom of eternal glory.

2nd Point. Consider—how severe the trial prepared for our Saint, when, on the arrival of his beloved spouse from the house of Zachary, he perceived her pregnancy. O inscrutable providence of God over his elect!—the mystery is revealed to Elizabeth, and hidden from Joseph. To the Immaculate Virgin the trial was not less painful, to behold the anguish and perplexity of him in whose person she honoured the authority and paternal care of God himself. And why does Divine Goodness thus exercise souls so loved, so

faithful? It is to perfect still more their virtue, and dispose them for yet more extraordinary graces. Thus tribulation is in reality a mark of the divine favour. On our part we must accept it with humility, and sustain it with patience; and whilst our Lord would seem to exercise only justice, let us enter into the designs of his mercy, saying, with David: "Prove me, O Lord, and try me; burn my reins and my heart. For thy mercy is before my eyes: and I am well pleased with thy truth." (*Ps.* xxv. 3.) Admire in this most trying conjuncture the humility of the Blessed Virgin, who utters not a word in her own justification; and the meekness of St. Joseph, from whom even a murmur does not escape, and who only seeks to satisfy his conscience without compromising the honour of his spouse. Ah! what vexations and divisions would be prevented by the imitation of these virtues.

3rd Point. Consider—"But while he thought on these things, behold the angel of the Lord appeared to him in his sleep, saying: Joseph, son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary, thy wife; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son: and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins." (*Matt.* i. 20, 21.) What a flood of light does this heavenly vision pour into the soul of our Saint! With what unspeakable joy does it penetrate his heart! How does it augment his veneration for his immaculate spouse! What is his gratitude, what his thanksgiving for being associated to this work of the Most High! How unbounded his confidence in that God who so sweetly illustrates in him these words of Job: "And brightness like that of the noonday shall arise to thee at evening: and when thou shalt think thyself consumed, thou shalt rise as the day star." (*Job*, xi. 17.) Beseech him whose eye ever watches over the salvation of his servants, that, through the intercession of St. Joseph, he

would deign, in all your doubts, afflictions, or temptations, to shed on your mind a ray of that light which dissipates every illusion of passion or human infirmity, whilst it confirms the soul in every good; and that he would also continually breathe into your heart the consoling and sustaining word, "fear not," which shall be an impregnable buckler against all the wiles and the violence of your enemies.

SAINT JOACHIM,

FATHER OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

(20th March.)

"I have prepared a lamp for my anointed."—(*Ps.* cxxxi. 17.)

1st Point. Consider—the happiness of this great Saint, who gave to God the Father a holy daughter; to God the Son a pure Mother; to God the Holy Ghost a worthy spouse; to the angels a queen; to man an advocate; to heaven and earth a sovereign mistress. Rejoice because he contributed to prepare that mysterious lamp out of which came the light of the world. Admire the rank which he holds by the eternal order of Divine Providence, which, in the same decree that appointed the Blessed Virgin Mother of Jesus Christ, appointed him for her father. Oh! how advantageous was that choice to him. If water is purest when approaching its source, Jesus and Mary being the two sources of grace, what favours, what privileges did they not communicate to St. Joachim, who was so dear to them. Thank both of them, and try to keep as near as you can to their persons by thought, respect, and love. The nearer you approach to Jesus, the more you will be enlightened. Honour Mary from the bottom of your heart, and with all the strength of your affections, because such is the desire of him whose will it is that we should have all, through the intercession of Mary.

2nd Point. Consider—the merit of this great Saint, and the virtue which he practised to prepare and render himself worthy of the choice that God made of his person, in order to give us, by him, the Mother of God and the mediatrix for the salvation of all men. He obtained it by his humility; suffering with sweetness the contempt he was treated with for his many years of sterility. He obtained it by his charity; for he divided his possessions into three parts—one for the altars, another for the poor, and the third for the support of his family. He obtained it by his prayers; for he passed his life in continual supplication, accompanied with many sighs and tears for the coming of the Messiah who was the expected of all nations. He obtained it by his abstinence; for he accompanied his prayer by mortification and fasting, knowing well that these were the arms of the saints with which they obtained the blessing of God and the victory over their enemies. In fine, he obtained it by his perseverance; never cooling in his devotion, or losing his confidence in the goodness of God, who thus tried him to grant him a more magnificent recompense for his patience, and shed more lustre on his virtue.

3rd Point. Consider—the power of this great Saint, and the credit he has with Jesus and Mary. 1. Mary belongs to him as his daughter, and Jesus belongs to Mary as her son. What influence has not St. Joachim over both. Has he not a right to command them, as a parent does a child? 2. Jesus loves Mary as his mother; Mary loves Joachim as her father. What, then, can Jesus refuse to his mother? and what can Mary refuse to her father? 3. If benefits conferred have all power over a good heart, what influence cannot St. Joachim have over the Blessed Virgin, to whom he gave life; and through her, over Jesus. Address yourself with confidence to this incomparable Saint, and doubt not that having so much power over the heart of

Jesus, he has also power over the subjects of his kingdom. Beg of him to extend his protection and charitable care over you, and to obtain for you the grace to belong, without reserve, to Jesus and Mary, and to live eternally under their sweet empire.

SAINT BENEDICT.

(21st March.)

"Look unto Abraham your father, and to Sara that bore you: for I called him alone and blessed him, and multiplied him."—(*Isaias*, li. 2.)

1st Point. Consider—and admire the great designs of God over this great Saint. The Holy Spirit drew him from the world and conducted him into the desert, to make him the head and father of religious and spiritual men, in order to teach them by his example and instruction to love God, and Jesus Christ his only Son; to bless him, to sing his praises; in short, to represent on earth the life of the angels in heaven. It is recorded in the menology of the saints of his Order, that, before his birth, our Saint was heard singing the praises of the Lord; happy presage of his devotion during life, and of what he was to teach many. It was from this circumstance that his parents gave him the name of Benedict, in the belief that he would at a future day bless and serve God in the most perfect manner, and be reciprocally blessed by him. And certainly their hope was not vain, nor their expectation deceived. It was St. Benedict who promulgated throughout the West the frequent use of the psalter of David, and that of the Blessed Virgin, which is composed of one hundred and fifty Hail Marys. Thank God for the graces bestowed on this great Saint, and remember that it is for the same great end which he so happily attained, and for this alone, that you have been created.

2nd Point. Consider—and admire the graces with which God has favoured this great Saint, to make him a fit instrument for promoting his glory. If it be true, as St. Gregory says, that his rule, which has conducted so many souls to heaven, is a perfect expression of his own life, and that he has taught nothing which he had not first practised in the highest perfection, we need only measure the height of this mysterious ladder, which he has constructed, in order to elevate the soul to the most sublime degree of divine love, to prove in him that God gives his grace to the humble, and that, by a reciprocal return of love, the humble render to him the glory which is his due. Do you desire to know by what means the Holy Spirit, who was his guide, conducted him to the summit of perfection? Consider attentively the twelve degrees of humility, which he called the ladder of Jacob:—1. To fear God in all things, and walk always in his presence. 2. To mortify inordinate desires and overcome self-will. 3. To obey superiors in the spirit of love and submission, after the example of Jesus Christ, who became obedient even unto death. 4. To preserve invincible patience in unexpected contradictions, humbling to self-love. 5. To be perfectly candid to superiors, and to acknowledge the most secret faults. 6. To esteem oneself worthy of contempt, and to be contented with the lowest and meanest office. 7. To believe oneself the most despicable of creatures. 8. To shun singularity, and observe common life with punctuality. 9. To love silence and observe it with exactness. 10. To moderate laughter, and not to indulge levity. 11. To speak little, with gravity, modesty, and good sense. 12. To behave like a poor criminal about to appear before the tribunal of God, and prove the evidence of interior humility by exterior modesty. The two sides of the ladder are body and mind, which must be humbled, to arrive at true sanctity.

3rd Point. Consider—the blessing which God gave

to the religious Order which St. Benedict founded, and review in thought the amazing number of popes, cardinals, archbishops, bishops, martyrs, confessors, and virgins, who have ascended by this mystic ladder under the guidance of this holy patriarch. If you desire to know how the goal is to be attained, listen to what was said to St. Maurus, when he saw the soul of St. Benedict ascending to heaven, radiant with glory: Behold the way by which St. Benedict, the well-beloved of God has ascended to take possession of eternal glory. Follow it with perseverance: do not return or look behind; ascend quickly, and try continually to increase in fervour until you reach the great end of your creation.

ANNUNCIATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

(25th March.)

1st Point. Consider—"The Angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee, called Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary." (*Luke*, i. 26, 27.) This embassage is borne by one of the princes of the heavenly court to an obscure and humble virgin, whose consent he demands for the accomplishment of a mystery the most stupendous. "Lord, what is man that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man that thou shouldst visit him?" (*Ps.* viii. 5.) How different are the views of God from those of men; they esteem only those who are exalted by birth, rank, or fortune. But "The Lord our God, who dwelleth on high, looketh down on the low things in heaven and in earth" (*Ps.* cxii. 5, 6.) He chooses not a Mother for the Word Incarnate amongst the illustrious of the world. A virgin, poor, but adorned with angelic purity, profound humility, and ardent charity, seems, in the designs of

Infinite Wisdom, alone worthy to bear this august title. Learn from this mystery what should be the objects of your esteem; what those of your contempt.

2nd Point. Consider—"And the Angel being come in, said unto her: Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: Blessed art thou among women." (*Luke*, i. 28.) In the respectful modesty of the angel behold the model of persons consecrated to God, who, being the ambassadors of Jesus Christ, should inspire those with whom they converse with sentiments of piety and devotion. Reflect on the words of the angelic salutation: "Hail, full of grace." This salutation perfectly expresses the eminent sanctity of this immaculate Virgin. "The Lord is with thee," dwelling in thy soul as in his sanctuary, and soon to become the Son of thy womb. "Blessed art thou among women," because thou shalt give to the world the source of benediction, and therefort art exempt from every stain of sin. How glorious to the Virgin this eulogium pronounced by an archangel! What a subject of joy to her devoted clients!

3rd Point. Consider—"Who having heard, was troubled at his saying, and thought with herself what manner of salutation this should be." (*Luke*, i. 29.) The sight of an angel in human form alarms her modesty; her humility is wounded by his praise. Both these delicate virtues fly the voice of adulation. "And the angel said to her: Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God." (*Luke*, i. 30.) The Spirit of God breathes peace to the soul, changing its fears into a sweet confidence. How happy if you shall hear at the hour of death these consoling words: "Thou hast found grace with God."

O Queen of Angels! as I am incapable of giving thee due praise, I rejoice that heaven itself has dictated to us a praise worthy of thy exalted dignity. May I unceasingly address thee in union with the Church of thy adorable Son; and each time I repeat this salutation,

whether during life or at the hour of death, may I unite in heart with the holy archangel in the desire of rendering thee the same glory thou receivedst when he addressed thee on the part of the Most High.

APRIL.

THE PATRONAGE OF SAINT JOSEPH.

(Third Sunday after Easter.)

1st Point. Consider—the incomparable dignity to which St. Joseph was exalted in being associated even to the divine paternity, when appointed the adopted father of the only begotten Son of God. "Father," says St. Chrysostom, "not merely by repute, but by delegated authority, which conferred on him all the rights of a parent with regard to the Incarnate Word." To St. Joseph did the Son of God commit the guardianship of his sacred humanity; by a grace all singular was he privileged to nourish with the sweat of his brow that precious body which was to be immolated on Calvary for the redemption of the world. In the person of our Saint were satisfied the yearning hearts of the ancient patriarchs: by his eyes they beheld, by his arms embraced, their longed-for Messiah. In fine, to St. Joseph the Holy Spirit confided the care of his chosen, his immaculate spouse; and if the Blessed Virgin is elevated in an inconceivable degree above all that is most excellent amongst pure creatures, how equally inconceivable the dignity of him whom she loved and honoured as her spouse, and obeyed as the vicegerent of God.

2nd Point. Consider—that if the dignity of St. Joseph is incomparable, the graces conferred on him

were commensurate to that dignity ; and by perfect co-operation with those graces, he combined in himself, and immeasurably excelled in the virtues of all other saints. Among those virtues a spirit of prayer shines conspicuous. But what was the prayer of him who continually enjoyed the sensible presence of the Eternal Father's consubstantial image? What union more sublime than to converse with Jesus Christ in person—to live, to labour, to repose in his divine society? If the countenance of Moses, after he had conversed with an angel, darted forth rays of light, with what dazzling lustre must the soul of St. Joseph be adorned, who passed his life in uninterrupted intercourse with Jesus Christ! For this august union of his soul with God, our Saint was prepared by perfect innocence and purity of heart ; by humility the most profound, and an unreserved devotedness to the glory and the will of the Most High.

3rd Point. Consider—that if the dignity and sanctity of St. Joseph are supereminent, his credit and power with God are proportionately great. What, then, should be your reverence for this singularly chosen and singularly privileged among all the saints. How unbounded should be your confidence in his patronage. There are some saints, says the angelic doctor, who have received from God the power of aiding us in certain particular necessities ; but the power of St. Joseph is unlimited, is universal, and extends to every want. All those, therefore, who have recourse to him with confiding piety, may rest assured that he will assist and protect them with paternal affection. Dispose yourself, then, to gather the precious fruits of his intercession ; endeavour to impress your heart with a more lively and tender devotion to this Saint, the nearest in heaven, as he was on earth, to the virgin Mother of God. Beseech him who was the adopted father of Jesus, the head of the holy family of Nazareth, to re-

ceive you into the number of his children; and that as he conducted the Son of God in his journeys, he would also guide you safely through the journey of this mortal life, into the haven of a blessed eternity.

SAINT CATHERINE OF SIENNA.

(30th April.)

"My beloved to me and I to him."—(*Cant* ii. 16.)

1st Point. Consider—that our Lord Jesus Christ communicated himself in so intimate and extraordinary a manner to St. Catherine, that she might say of him by peculiar prerogative: "My beloved to me." He gave her a special blessing when she was but six years of age, and looked on her in so sweet and gracious a manner, whilst manifesting himself to her in the glory of his ascension, that she preserved the remembrance of it during life, and henceforth consecrated to him all her affections. He, at the same time, communicated to her such a sublime spirit of prayer, that her mind was almost continually united to God, and so penetrated with the beauty and infinite greatness of his perfections, that she could not indulge any other thought, nor give her attention, much less her esteem and affection, to any other object. He gave her the crown of thorns, which she preferred to that of gold, and to the jewels which sparkle on the crowns of monarchs. He gave her his wounds as a hidden treasure, and at the same time afflicted her with acute pain; but she concealed her sufferings as much as possible, preferring their bitterness to all the delights of this world.

Amiable Jesus! how beneficent art thou to thy creatures! and how inexcusable shall I be if I do not recur with confidence to thee, who invitest me so lovingly, only to enrich me with thy gifts?

2nd Point. Consider—that St. Catherine devoted herself to her Divine Spouse by so faithful a correspondence with grace, that she could say with confidence, "And I to him." She made of her heart an oratory and altar on which she continually offered herself as a holocaust to the greater glory of God. The solitude, in which she took such delight, was at the same time her purgatory and her paradise. She suffered incessantly from the demons, who persecuted her with their utmost malice. and besides she cruelly tormented her body. Her bed consisted of two planks, on which she slept but half an hour, and she always wore either hair-cloth or an iron chain. She took the discipline three times a day: the first time for herself, the second for the living, the third for the dead. Besides, her abstinence was almost perpetual. But if all these pains were a species of purgatory, the heavenly favours enjoyed by strict union with Jesus Christ, constituted at the same time her paradise, in which her soul, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, incessantly contemplated her Divine Spouse, and was, as it were, happily transformed into him. See how far you are from this perfection. Humble yourself in the consideration of your many defects. Aspire henceforth with more fervour to perfect union with God, so that you may be able to say with this holy virgin: "My beloved to me, and I to him." Joy, sorrow, life and death are alike indifferent to me, provided that I love him and be beloved by him.

3rd Point. Consider—by what means St. Catherine formed so intimate a communication with the Incarnate Word; review them attentively, and endeavour to reduce them to practice. 1. The good use of grace, which is given in proportion to the degree of correspondence on the part of creatures. 2. Continual and universal mortification of all the senses and powers of the soul. 3. Exact observance of rules, and entire de-

pendance on superiors. 4. Great courage in overcoming natural repugnances. 5. Profound humility, in which virtue our Divine Lord deigned to instruct our Saint. Having appeared to her, he said: I am the substantial Word of my Father, who speak but once; but, if you listen to me, I will teach you two truths which will render you blessed: I am all, you are nothing.

Receive these two maxims with profound respect. Beg light to understand them. Say, with St. Augustin: "Lord teach me to know thee; teach me to know myself, that knowing thee I may love thee, and knowing myself I may despise myself."

MAY.

SAINTS PHILIP AND JAMES, APOSTLES.

(1st May.)

1st Point. Consider—"And all their works are as the sun in the sight of God: and his eyes are continually upon their ways." (*Eccl.* xvii. 16.) In the lives and actions of the great Apostles whom the Church on this day presents to our veneration, we find a perfect image of the true Sun of Justice. St. James is said to have resembled our Divine Lord in the traits of his countenance; but in innocence of life, and sanctity of conversation, he bore him a still happier resemblance. Our blessed Apostle guarded the purity of his heart by continual mortification of the senses, and indefatigable perseverance in prayer. The universal opinion of his sanctity, and the veneration in which he was consequently held, acquired him the title of "the just man;" a name he worthily sustained by ardent zeal in preaching the gospel of Christ, paternal charity towards the

poor, and faithful discharge of all his pastoral duties, Learn, from the example of St. James, that nothing is so glorious for a disciple of Jesus Christ, as to be clothed in the garments and livery of his Lord, and to trace in himself a living portrait of the virtues of the Incarnate Sanctity. The most exalted dignity of man, according to St Leo. is to imitate his Creator, and become, in the hand of the universal Father, a medium of benevolence to his creatures.

2nd Point. Consider—St. Philip, as a sun in the Church of Christ, shedding the beams of evangelic light over the face of the earth. No sooner had he recognised the Saviour of men, than he presented his heart to the impressions of grace, which immediately formed in him an image of his divine Master, and constituted him one of the first disciples of the Son of God. In the same moment that the first ray of the Sun of Justice enlightened his mind, he also became a light pointing out the Messiah to his brethren. The ardent love for Jesus Christ that glowed in the heart of St. Philip enkindled an equal desire to behold the Eternal Father; and that grace he implored as the completion of his happiness. After the descent of the Holy Spirit on the disciples, this Apostle, burning with desire to extend the kingdom of Christ, preached the gospel in Scythia, his portion of the evangelic vineyard, and brought it to the perfection of Christianity. Beg, through his intercession, that your cold and tepid heart may be also warmed into the ardour of true charity.

3rd Point. Consider—how St. James and St. Philip having perfectly imitated the Sun of Justice in his course, crowned that happiness by a still more happy imitation of his setting. Both expired in offering the prayer of charity for those who relentlessly persecuted them even unto a cruel death. Alas! where shall we now seek pure charity and zeal?—where find a sincere and ardent desire of God's greater glory? Who is

grieved to behold the Divine Majesty offended? Who is contented with his love and his grace? Who says, with St. Philip: "Lord, shew us the Father, and it is enough for us?" (*John*, xiv. 8.) We find many ambitious of honours and dignities, as were the sons of Zebedee; many curious to inquire into future events, as they who said to our Lord: "Tell us when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming and of the consummation of the world?" (*Matt.* xxiv. 3); many misled by false zeal, as the disciples who would "command fire to come down from heaven and consume them" (*Luke*, ix. 54.) But we meet few who can say with such sincerity as do our blessed Apostles, I seek God alone: to serve him in this life, and enjoy him in eternity, is the only desire of my soul. Yet in this alone beatitude essentially consists.

FINDING OF THE HOLY CROSS.

(3rd May.)

1st Point. Consider—those words of Jesus Christ: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him may not perish, but may have life everlasting." (*John*, iii. 14, 15.) The cross is the most admirable invention of Incarnate Wisdom for effecting the salvation of sinners. The first grace that leads souls to repentance is, according to the holy Council of Trent, a chastening fear of divine justice. The cross is a means most powerful to impress this saving fear; for, if the Eternal Father exercises vengeance so terrible on his beloved and most innocent Son, because he had assumed the penalty of sin, what should the sinner fear, who, by a criminal abuse of mercy, shall fall into the hands of inexorable justice! Jesus agonizing and expiring on

a gibbet, exhibits more fearfully than do the fires of hell, the wrath of an offended God. For, if the Holy of Holies, writhing beneath the avenging arm, and prostrate on the earth bathed in his precious blood, implores the chalice may pass, what shall be the consternation of the sinner when, at the final moment, he shall behold the same redoubted arm of eternal justice about to precipitate him into the infernal abyss! Tepid soul, who art negligent of thy salvation under pretence that God is an indulgent and compassionate Father, approach thy agonizing Saviour; contemplate his bleeding wounds. If thus the well-beloved is stricken, what shall become of the enemy?

2nd Point. Consider—the cross is the most admirable invention of Incarnate Wisdom for inspiring confidence in the divine mercy. It is the throne of grace whence an expiring criminal obtained remission of all his crimes. And why did our Lord so promptly extend to him a favour even exceeding the tenor of his supplication, but to encourage sinners to have recourse to his clemency with firm confidence of pardon, provided they implore it with a contrite and humble heart. "Let us go, therefore, with confidence to the throne of grace: that we may obtain pardon and find grace in seasonable aid." (*Heb.* iv. 16.) Fear not a repulse, says St. Chrysostom; your debt compared to your ransom is as a drop of water compared to the ocean. There is no stain which the blood of the Immaculate Lamb cannot efface. "Thou shalt wash me, and I shall be made whiter than snow." (*Ps.* l. 9.)

3rd Point. Consider—the cross is the most admirable invention of Incarnate Wisdom to testify his love and attract ours. The heart must be indeed obdurate, observes St. Augustin, that responds not to a preventing love. Now, what more wonderful proof of love can be imagined? The Father spared not his only begotten Son, but delivered him to death; and the

Son became obedient even to the death of the cross, that we might be restored to the heavenly inheritance. Jesus Christ offered for us the all-atoning sacrifice, as priest and victim, that from slaves of the demon we might be restored to the liberty of the children of God: wherefore, adds the Apostle, as the well beloved of the Father, in whom were hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, hath redeemed us in his blood, let us henceforth live only for him who hath died to obtain for us eternal salvation.

THE APPARITION OF SAINT MICHAEL.

(8th May.)

1st Point. Consider—in the words of the prophet: "And behold Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me," (*Dan.* x. 13,) how Almighty God, desiring to manifest his paternal providence over our souls, has deputed St. Michael as a universal protector and defender, under whose superintendence our guardian angels watch over and assist us. But, as the charitable succour imparted to us by this prince of the celestial host is spiritual and invisible, our heavenly Father, adapting himself to the weakness of our minds, has rendered it sensible by many marvellous apparitions, some of which demonstrate the care of this great archangel over the Church in general; others, his zeal for the sanctification of our souls individually. Wherefore the Catholic Church throughout the world, in order to mark her gratitude for the continual benefits conferred on her through his ministry, celebrates on this day the Apparition of St. Michael on Mount Gargan. And, as he was of old the protector of the Synagogue and the people of God, he is also the tutelar angel of the Church of Jesus Christ, and exercises towards her the three

offices which St. Denis attributes to the angels, namely, to purify, to enlighten, and to perfect. As a member of the universal Church, unite with all the faithful in offering to this chief minister of the divine providence your most grateful and respectful homage; commending also your soul to his especial care. What happiness and security may you not hope for under such a protector? If you wisely avail of his favour, no assault of the demon can harm you. On the contrary, his malicious efforts shall be cast back upon himself to his own greater confusion.

2nd Point. Consider—how in many of the apparitions of St. Michael, is discovered the indefatigable care with which, as chief of all the tutelar angels to whose guidance God has committed the souls of men, he watches over each of us individually. According to St. Jerome, it is this glorious spirit who, by an especial appointment, presides over the prayers of the faithful, and by his influence renders them more acceptable before the throne of the Most High. He is also the angel whom St. John beheld standing before the altar, having in his hand a thurible of gold, to whom was given much incense that he might offer the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar that stood before the throne; and the smoke of the incense, which is the prayers of the saints, as a most sweet perfume ascended from the hand of the angel before the face of God. St. Michael, as the great adversary of the powers of darkness, watches over us in our combats with those evil spirits, coming to our assistance as he did to that holy religious mentioned by St. Anselm, whom the demon tempted to despair, reproaching him first with the sins he had been guilty of previous to his religious profession; then, terrifying him by the representation of the faults into which he had subsequently fallen. But the conqueror of Lucifer drove away the tempter, by declaring that the former subjects of accusation were remitted when the

servant of God pronounced his holy vows; and the latter also cancelled by the reception of the holy sacraments, the graces attached to the various observances of religious life, and the patience with which he endured a tedious and painful malady. This great archangel has particular charge of the dying, and by his prayers obtains for the faithful powerful graces in their passage to eternity. In fine, he presents their souls before the judgment-seat of God, according to the words which the holy Church uses in his office: "And let the standard-bearer, St. Michael, bring them into the holy light which thou didst promise of old to Abraham and his posterity."

3rd Point. Consider—by what acts of devotion you may best ensure the protection and assistance of St. Michael in every circumstance of your life, and especially in its last and most perilous moments. Gratitude being a sentiment very pleasing to the angels, as it always renders glory to the infinite goodness of God, make it your frequent practice to offer acts of thanksgiving to the Most High for the glory conferred on the prince of the celestial host, as well as for the great benefits which, through his ministry, are dispensed to the Church in general, and to each of the faithful in particular. You can also impress on the minds of youth, on the dying, and, in fine, of all whom you instruct, a lively devotion to this blessed spirit. Above all else aim at the perfect exercise of those exalted virtues of which he is so distinguished a model; and amongst them profound humility and entire purity of intention appear conspicuous. Adopt the device of the great archangel: "Who is like unto God!" and let this sentiment reanimate the zeal with which you should devote yourself to the service of God alone, for it embodies and expresses, in a single sentence, all the perfection to which a religious is obliged to aspire. In order to excite a more lively spirit of devotedness, make

the divine attributes of your God—particularly his infinite goodness, as discovered to us on Calvary and in the Blessed Eucharist—the subject of your deep consideration. You must also, for the love of this sovereignly-amiable Lord, renounce every affection that would divide your heart, of whose entire possession he is infinitely jealous; and you should esteem as mere vanity, even abhor as vile and despicable, all that is not directed to his love and service.

SAINT MARY MAGDALEN DE PAZZI.

(27th May.)

"She hath loved much."—(*Luke*, vii. 47.)

1st Point. Consider—that St Mary Magdalen de Pazzi, like the holy reformer of the Carmelite Order imbibed early in life an ardent love of Jesus crucified. When, the day she received the religious habit, the crucifix was put into her hands, her soul was so inflamed with love for her Divine Spouse, that from thenceforth her life was passed in almost continual ecstasy. It is related of her that, one day, being ravished in spirit, she learned from the Father of Light that the seraphim communicate to the spouses of the Divine Word four different kinds of love. The first is a unitive love, which purifies them from those defects that retard union with the Heavenly Spouse: the second is a communicative love, which inflames them with so ardent a desire of seeing their Divine Spouse loved by all creatures, that like St. Paul, they would even be content to be anathema for the salvation of a fellow-creature. The third is a transforming love which in a manner deifies the soul—conforming her sentiments and desires with those of her Divine Spouse. The fourth is a preservative love, which causes the wil

to act with wisdom to purify the intentions, and with prudence, to be a safeguard for all the virtues necessary to these different kinds of love, and the assemblage of which form a most beautiful nuptial ring for the espousals of the soul with her God.

2nd Point. Consider—St. Mary Magdalen's love of suffering. Our Divine Lord once said to St. Bridget, that "divine love, like a fruitful tree, produces every virtue; but amongst them all, the first in rank is obedience. Hence, I, who am your God, did not hesitate to submit to the death of the cross." In imitation of a God suffering and dying on a cross, our Saint conceived so ardent a desire of suffering, that, when only twelve years of age, she plaited for herself a thorny wreath of orange branches, and, pressing it closely on her head, passed an entire night in extreme torture. In her religious life, she tormented her body by the use of sharp instruments of penance, and lost no opportunity of humbling and mortifying herself. But who can express the interior sufferings of her pure soul, during the severe and protracted trial to which she was subjected during the space of five years, when every temptation which the malice of hell could devise, seemed to be let loose upon her, and which she supported with so heroic a constancy, in imitation of her crucified Spouse, that, when reminded of the brevity of all human sufferings, her reply was: "It is not consolation I seek, but to suffer even as my Saviour did unto death."

3rd Point. Consider—that the most holy Sacrament of the altar was the furnace of love whence the heart of St. Mary Magdalen was inflamed with an ardent desire of suffering and of the cross. She had scarcely attained the use of reason, when she learned from Truth itself, that to find Jesus Christ she should seek him in prayer and in the adorable Sacrament. Being still too young to be permitted to approach the holy table, she used to cling to her mother the whole day on which she

had seen her communicate, both out of respect and from the interior comfort she experienced in being so near one who had that day received the most precious Body of Christ. In the choice of a convent she selected that in which the privilege of daily communion was permitted; and the strength she drew from that source of every blessing lightened all the trials of religious life. She used to tell the novices under her charge that there was no more efficacious means of arriving at a high degree of sanctity, than the worthy and frequent approach to the holy table. Her instructions on this subject deserve to be seriously pondered. "If you desire to arrive quickly at perfection, take Jesus Christ crucified for your Master; listen attentively to his instructions, for he ceases not to speak to your heart, particularly when residing therein after Communion. Those moments are the most precious of your lives: that is the proper time for making yourselves saints. If you are grateful, you will *then* thank God for all his favours: if you love him, you will *then* entertain yourself with your beloved: if you have committed a fault, *then* is the time to sue for pardon, and to lay before your Saviour not only your own necessities, but those of your Sisters and of the whole Church. *Then* is the time for learning all the secrets of a spiritual life; and if you are attentive to the inspirations of your beloved, you will find him the best of masters, and will easily understand what he expects from you. If God be your delight, no time can be so proper for enjoying him as those precious moments during which you have him in your bosom: if your unmortified passions give you trouble, what time more proper to solicit the strength and grace necessary for their subjugation? if you desire fortitude to correspond with divine inspirations, there is no nourishment so strengthening as the Bread of Angels." Profit of this instruction as well as of that of our Saint, who, when dying, gave to her religious Sisters: "Love Jesus

Christ; suffer willingly for him, and confide entirely in him." Happy they who can say on their death-beds, as did our Saint: "I die, without having ever been able to conceive, how any one that has faith could ever consent to a mortal sin."

JUNE.

SAINT JOHN FRANCIS REGIS, CONFESSOR.

(16th June.)

1st Point. Consider—that the Spirit of God, having designed St. Francis Regis to be a model of perfection alike in the exercises of interior life and the functions of apostolic zeal, inspired him to base that perfection on a solid and profound humility. Enlightened by that heavenly guide, Regis, though adorned with innocence, and consumed with labour in extending the glory of the name and kingdom of Jesus Christ, was so sincerely and deeply penetrated with a conviction of his own nothingness and baseness, as to believe the last degree of contempt and ignominy but his due. These sentiments, so strongly impressed on his heart, appeared in the horror and confusion he manifested at the least appearance of praise or admiration which his heroic virtues or miraculous gifts elicited. Thirsting to resemble the heaven-descended prototype of perfect humility, Regis loved, desired, and sought humiliations under every form. Endeavour to imitate this bright example of exalted holiness; examine yourself by his spirit, that you may at least redeem the deficiency by a salutary confusion.

2nd Point. Consider—that the perfection of St. Francis Regis was sustained and daily augmented by

an eminent spirit of prayer. This grace he cultivated with the utmost assiduity. He frequently spent entire nights in familiar converse with God, even when engaged in his most laborious missions. The fruit of this heavenly exercise was an uninterrupted union of his heart with God; and whether in the streets or cities, or amid the rocks and precipices, where he exposed his life in bearing the comforts of religion to the desolate cottage of the mountain peasant; whether engaged in conversation or occupied in the various exterior duties of charity and zeal, he lost not for a moment the recollection of the divine presence. In the variety of objects that met his view, Regis beheld only the great Creator of the universe, the sovereign Lord, the eternal Father of all. The spirit of your vocation is essentially and eminently identified with a spirit of prayer. What are your endeavours to form and cultivate it in your soul? Unremitting attention in spiritual duties, and the practice of devout aspirations whilst engaged in occupations prescribed by obedience, cannot fail to render you a proficient in this holy exercise.

3rd Point. Consider—that the perfection of St. Francis Regis was crowned by an intense charity. This all-animating virtue was not confined within the glowing furnace of a devoted heart, but shed its light and warmth on every fellow-man; in whom he saw, and loved, and served the incarnate charity of God. Yet the destitute, the abandoned poor, were ever the objects of his tenderest predilection, as they more touchingly represented the sufferings of a redeeming God. In serving those children of sorrow neither toil nor peril could chill the ardour of his zeal: with the Apostle of nations he desired to spend himself and be spent for their sake. Every follower of Jesus Christ is called on to serve him in the persons of the poor and suffering. Compare your sentiments and actions with those of the bright example you have been meditating, whose gene-

sity of soul still exceeded his indefatigable labours; d beseech him to obtain for you, not a barren admi- tion of his virtues, but grace to begin now at least to ace their portrait in your own life.

SAINT ALOYSIUS GONZAGA, CONFESSOR.

(21st June.)

1st Point. Consider—those words of the Psalmist: Thou hast prevented him with the blessings of thy weetness: thou hast set on his head a crown of pre- ous stones." (*Ps.* xx. 4.) The preventing grace of hich the royal prophet speaks, was eminently com- unicated to the angelic youth whom the Church holds rth this day to our veneration, and who, even in his nder infancy, was inspired with the most ardent de- re of perfection. This early grace he cultivated by siduous prayer and union of his heart with God. . Charles Borromeo attests, that blessed Aloysius, hilst yet a child, had attained to an eminent degree heavenly contemplation, and that he seemed almost ntinually absorbed in the divine presence. As he dvanced in years, his pious attraction to the exercises interior life was more fully developed. Besides pending four or five hours in prayer each day, he fre- uently, even in the depth of winter, broke in upon his st, that he might devote a portion of the night to holy ntemplation. But the union of his soul with God as uninterrupted, amidst the tumult and dissipation courts. Even there he listened to the whisper of the ivine Spirit, and responded to it with all the ardour a devoted heart. Such was the habit of recollection attained, as to seem to possess an absolute empire er his senses and imagination. In fine, his soul was living sanctuary of the Divinity, which exhaled all

around the odour of piety. Examine what has bee your co-operation with the graces which have so libe rally marked the course of your life; what your effort to attain that union with God to which it is your dut to aspire.

2nd Point. Consider—that in St. Aloysius was ad mirably illustrated the sentiment of the royal prophet "How lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts my soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of th Lord." (*Ps.* lxxxiii. 1.) The charity that burned s intensely in his heart was evinced in his devotion to th eucharist victim of love, in whose presence his postur was usually that in which adoring angels are painte The seraphic ardour of his soul was visible in the swe and abundant tears he shed at the consecration of th Divine Mysteries, and in receiving the adorable Sacra ment. From that sacred source of grace our Saint dre not only the heavenly science which astonished th most enlightened in spiritual life, and the holy affe tions with which his heart overflowed, but still mor the practice of those sublime virtues especially exem plified in that mystery of goodness. If St. Aloysiu was eminently humble, meek, full of charity and swee ness—his every action marked with the most perfe spirit of sacrifice—it was because he had formed h heart on that of a God-Man laid open to us in the divi Eucharist. What is your reverence and devotion Jesus Christ in the mystery of his love? What th fruit you draw from the sacred communion?

3rd Point. Consider—with what perfection St. Alo sius accomplished the admonition of the apostle: "B ye humbled under the mighty hand of God; that h may exalt you in the time of visitation." (1 *Pete* v. 6.) The sanctity of blessed Aloysius was founde on, and perfected by most profound humility. Th virtue may be divided into four degrees. The fir humbles our judgment, by submission to all that fai

teaches: the second humbles our presumption, by distrust of self and unreserved confidence in Almighty power and goodness: the third humbles our free-will, by obedience to those whom the universal Master has invested with his own power: the fourth humbles both mind and body under the yoke of the cross, by a love of humiliation and suffering. By this ladder of paradise did St. Aloysius ascend to and enter the low and narrow door of the heavenly kingdom, where those who were least on earth by sincere humility, are most exalted in eternal glory.

SAINT JOHN BAPTIST.

(24th June.)

1st Point. Consider—those words of the Evangelist: "He shall be great before the Lord." (*Luke*, i. 15.) There are some who are great in their own eyes—who entertain a high idea of their own excellence and merit; but such greatness is equally delusive and dangerous; for St. Paul says: "If any man thinketh himself to be something, whereas he is nothing, he deceiveth himself." (*Gal.* vi. 3.) Wherefore, the inspired sage, to preserve man from the destructive influence of pride, proposes a quite contrary maxim: "The greater thou art, the more humble thyself in all things" (*Eccle.* iii. 20) This was the ruling principle of St. John Baptist, who, in every conjuncture, took humiliation as his chosen portion, that in all things he might refer the entire glory to Jesus Christ alone. And did he lose the honour he thus magnanimously rejected? On the contrary, the Son of God himself renders to him that glorious testimony: "Amen, I say to you, that there hath not risen among them that are born of women a greater than John the Baptist." (*Matt.* xi. 11.)

2nd Point. Consider—There are some who are

great in the estimation of men; but such esteem is f
from being a real proof of solid excellence Men us
ally value only the transitory riches, honours, a
pleasures of the present life; nor are they more disc
minating in their judgment of virtue, often mistaki
for true sanctity that which is only superficial. B
though they were not deceived, their esteem is so wort
less that they who deserve it most hold it in utter co
tempt. The people are ready to receive St. John as
prophet—even to acknowledge him as the Messiah-
but he rejects alike the honour which is his due, as th
which belongs not to him: teaching us by his exam
to despise all human applause. Hence you should co
clude how necessary it is to shun whatever flatte
vanity or self-love, and heartily to embrace the humi
ation so abhorred by worldlings, but which is the on
path to true and everlasting glory.

3rd Point. Consider—that to be great before G
is to be truly great; and this alone should be the obj
of our ambition, as it is the only source of real hono
and happiness. From the words of the angel to Zac
ary we learn that the greatness of the holy precurs
consisted in austerity of life: "He shall drink no wine
because strict mortification of the senses is indispensab
necessary for all who aspire to the divine favour.
the habitual union of his soul with God: "He shall
filled with the Holy Ghost," (*Luke*, i. 15): this uni
he cultivated by assiduous recollection, silence, a
prayer. In zeal: "To prepare to the Lord a perf
people." (*Luke*, i. 17.) This zeal for the divine hono
is the perfection of charity; and by her proficiency
that noblest of virtues, is the grandeur of the soul
be estimated. He who excels in charity is assured
great: he who is weak in that virtue is of little acco
in the views of God. He who is void of charity is
thing, according to the words of St. Paul: "If I ha
not charity I am nothing." Sustain my feeble effo

my God! with that omnipotent hand which raises up ie lowly, and exalts to thrones in thy heavenly king- om those whom the world holds in contempt.

SAINT PETER, APOSTLE.

(29th June.)

1st Point. Consider—that the greatest honour which an be conferred on mortal man, is to hold the place of Christ in the spiritual kingdom of his Church: for, if he greatest saints gloried in being the servants of the eavenly Lord, how transcendant a dignity to be estab- ished the head and father of the universal family vhich embraces within its bosom all the elect of God! t is under that august title we on this day present our omage to the chief of the Apostles, whom the Son of God appointed his vicegerent on earth; to whose guar- dianship he entrusted our souls, the purchase of his precious blood, and to whom we consequently owe a ilial reverence and devotion. Admire the singular prerogatives that distinguished the election of the vi- ible head of the Church. The Eternal Father, in electing St. Peter for that supreme dignity, revealed o him the divinity of his Son: "Blessed art thou, imon Bar-Jona: because flesh and blood hath not re- ealed it to thee, but my Father, who is in heaven." (*Matt.* xvi. 17.) The Son of God, after testing his faith nd his love, conferred on him the power of opening nd closing the celestial portals: "Whatsoever thou halt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven: nd whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth, it shall be osed also in heaven." (*Matt.* xvi. 19.) The Holy host confirmed him—shed on him his gifts in rich ofusion—and rendered his faith immutable: "I have tablished the pillars thereof." (*Ps.* lxxiv. 4.) The lorable Trinity gave him unbounded empire over the fernal spirits: so that all their malicious machinations

are unavailing against that Church of which he is the ruler: "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (*Matt.* xvi. 18.)

2nd Point. Consider—how, in the person of the chief pastor of the Church, is exemplified in an eminent degree those virtues which her Divine Founder requires in her children. The faith of St. Peter was truly as the rock which mocks the fury of the winds and waves. His humility continually sought the centre of his own nothingness, and such was his love of contempt and abjection, that he sought it even in the opprobrium of his torments—desiring to be crucified with his head towards the earth. The penance of our Saint was life-long in its duration; we may say that his heart, like to the rock of the desert, being stricken by that look of redeeming charity, which, from amidst his own sufferings, the Son of God cast on his erring disciple, ceased not to pour forth its waters until they were changed into the sanguinary stream that flowed under the agony of his crucifixion. His fortitude and his zeal were alike invincible in enduring with heroic devotedness all the labours, dangers, and persecutions which should necessarily be encountered in the spiritual conquest of the world. In fine, his confidence and love were supereminent. His Divine Master was not satisfied that this favoured disciple should love him only with an ordinary affection; he required from the chief of the apostolic college a love exceeding that of all the other disciples: "Lovest thou me more than these?" (*John*, xxi. 15.) Of this devotedness St. Peter gave a signal testimony when he walked on the waters to meet his Lord. It is love, says St. Ambrose, that sustains him. No sooner does he perceive Jesus Christ, than, regardless of peril, he casts himself on the foaming billows, in order to be more speedily united to the sovereign object of his affections. O fervent disciple! fearest thou not lest the yawning waters should engulf

thee? His gaze is so riveted on the form of his dear Master, that he overlooks the menacing aspect of the waves. Charity, which banishes fear, imparts to the loving heart a security amidst the most appalling dangers that seems even miraculous. If then, I love Jesus Christ, no difficulty can affright me; for he who walketh upon the waters can rescue me from the abyss of tribulation! he who descended from heaven to seek me, will save me when I call upon him, though I were sunk beneath the waves of human misery!

3rd Point. Consider—the lively resemblance which, in life and death, the Prince of the Apostles bore to his divine Master. Under Jesus Christ, St. Peter was the corner stone and foundation of the Church—the visible head, the father and guide of all the faithful—but, above all other traits of similarity, that vouchsafed to him in expiring on the same instrument of torture as his Master and Lord was supereminently glorious. St. Ambrose observes, that on Calvary the liberality of our Divine Redeemer, stript him of all things—he bequeathed his garments to the executioners—his mother to St. John—his spirit to his heavenly Father—his sacred body to the tomb—but his cross was the destined inheritance of St. Peter, in order that, not only in life but also in death, he might still be the perfect follower, the true representative of the Son of God on earth. In one circumstance indeed, did the crucifixion of the Apostle differ from that of his divine Master, namely, that at the supplication of his humility, he was crucified with his head towards the earth, and by this we are instructed that in the views of Divine Providence, the chief pastor of the Church must unceasingly look up in supplication to heaven, as Jesus Christ, in mercy, looked down towards the earth, and thus from the cross to which both are attached by this mutual intercourse, continue to extend and preserve the Church.

Beseech this great Apostle to obtain for you a lively

faith in Jesus Christ, his precepts and maxims, and such a spirit of penitential love as may unite you continually with your suffering Saviour, by an unremitting exercise of mortification, until, "this valley of tears" being traversed, you enter into the Church triumphant, to be inebriated with eternal delights.

JULY.

VISITATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

(2nd July.)

"He who is mighty has done great things for me."—(*Luke*, i. 49.)

1st Point. Consider—that this day's festival contains solid instruction and matter for imitation which is not evident at first sight. If the subject is beheld in the distance it appears an ordinary visit of kindness which the Blessed Virgin makes to her cousin, but it viewed more closely, it is replete with interest, whether we consider the greatness of the mystery—the stupendous miracle wrought—or the heroic virtues exercised. It is by these three circumstances we must judge of its true sublimity. Let us first consider the mystery, than which nothing can be greater, for St. Elizabeth discloses all that had passed in the Incarnation, known only to the Blessed Virgin. In the Incarnation, the angel asked the consent of Mary; in the visitation, St. Elizabeth extols her for having given it, and pronounces her blessed for having believed. In the Incarnation the angel announces to the Virgin that she shall be mother to the Son of God; in the visitation, St. Elizabeth publishes both: "And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (*Luke*, i. 43); and again, "Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb." (*Luke*, i. 42.) But what

words can express the greatness of the Incarnate Word? Could he have humbled himself more than by assuming human nature? And could the Blessed Virgin render a more worthy testimony to his glory than in the words of her beautiful canticle, "My soul doth magnify the Lord; and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my saviour." (*Luke*, i. 46, 47.)

Let us congratulate her on her happiness, and endeavour to imitate her virtues. Let us, with Mary, glorify the Lord, and rejoice in our God, for, although she alone is his mother, according to the flesh, nevertheless, we may be allied to him by faith and conformity to his will: "For whosoever shall do the will of my Father, that is in heaven, he is my brother, and sister, and mother." (*Matt.* xii. 50.)

2nd Point. Consider—the greatness of the miracle. Never before had God made any human creature the medium of conveying grace, and sanctifying the sinner. But in this mystery, the word of the Blessed Virgin is the organ of the Holy Ghost, conveying light, joy, and grace to the soul of an infant, to make of him the greatest among men. St. Elizabeth expresses thus, this first and only miracle of the Mother of God: "For, behold, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy." (*Luke*, i. 44.)

O Virgin Mother of my Saviour, and of all the predestinate, operate a similar miracle in my soul: "Let thy voice sound in my ears, for thy voice is sweet, and thy face comely." (*Cant.* ii. 14.)

3rd Point. Consider—the sublimity of the virtues which the Blessed Virgin practises. Her faith is perfect. In order to work a miracle the soul must be united to God by submission and dependence, as an instrument in the hands of the mechanic. That submission to God is exercised by the virtue of faith, which subjects to him the most noble faculty of man. Her humility

is profound; she descends from the highest dignity t which a mere creature is capable of being raised, that o the divine maternity, to the lowest offices of a handmaid Her charity is heroic—her visit to her cousin prove it; and her zeal aims at nothing less than to crush th head of the serpent, to destroy the empire of the demon and to withdraw the greatest among men from hi tyranny. He leaps for joy, says St. Jerome, at th entrance of Mary, because he hears the voice of th Lord, who speaks through Mary. Oh, what a happines to hear Jesus! But who can hear him without th intercession of the Blessed Virgin? Oh, divine aurora who gavest birth to him who is the light of the world obtain for us that he may be born in our hearts by a ardent love, which will withdraw us from the darknes of sin, and raise us, by the practice of solid virtues, t the clear vision of God, and the enjoyment of our Sove reign Good.

SAINT MARY MAGDALEN.

(July 22nd.)

"Dost thou see this woman?"—(*Luke*, vii. 44.)

1st Point. Consider—in this worldly-minded woman the image of a soul which removes from God and her self, to devote herself to the vanities of the world St. Gregory asks, "What is more intimately unite to us than our heart? And, nevertheless, when thi heart becomes dissipated by the indulgence of evi thoughts, it wanders and strays far from us." For, a venerable Bede remarks, "the more a sinner increase in crime, the more he separates himself from the grac of God, and, consequently, from himself." O how de plorable is this misfortune! for he who is separate from Jesus Christ is banished from heaven, his tru country, and becomes a lover of this world of darkness

Oh Lord! how blind are sinners, if they think to ide themselves from thee, in withdrawing from thy ercy. Let them rather be converted and seek thee, who never forsakest thy creatures, though they abandon hee, their Creator.

2nd Point. Consider—in this penitent, the portrait f a true conversion. "And behold a woman that was n the city, a sinner, when she knew that he sat at meat n the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of intment; and standing behind at his feet, she began o wash his feet with tears, and wiped them with the airs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed hem with the ointment." (*Luke*, vii. 37, 38.) Do you lesire, like Magdalen, to be perfectly converted? Enter nto yourself the moment you hear the divine voice peaking to you, and, considering seriously the state of our soul, say: Where am I? What manner of life lo I lead? What do I hope for? What do I desire? What would become of me were I to die in this state? What would be my fate? What penalty should I have o pay for my sins? Moved by these considerations, ise quickly and cast yourself at the feet of the Son of God. There, weeping over your sins, say to him, in he words of the penitent Augustin: "Where was I, ny God, when I offended thee?" Thou wert present with me, and I was far from thee, and as it were, bsent from myself; and not being able to find myself, took no care to seek thee. But behold me now at hy feet, where thou hast conducted me by thy grace. O how good art thou, O Lord! to those who seek thee, nd who cast themselves into the arms of thy mercy, here to find support in weakness, and consolation in nisery.

3rd Point. Consider—in this holy woman, filled with divine love, the example of a soul perfectly united o Jesus Christ She testifies her love which she bears him by her sighs, her desires, her actions, and perse-

verant fidelity. First—she cries out with the spouse in the Canticles: "I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, that you tell him that I languish with love." (*Cant.* v. 8.) Secondly—by her desires. Ah? Lord, she says, thou hast made me only to love thee, and thou commandest me to love thee with all the ardour of which I am capable: come then and enkindle in me the fire of divine love, for I ardently desire to be united to thee. Thirdly—she does not rest satisfied with desires only, but reduces them to practice, and remains so faithful to her Divine Spouse that she never again separates herself from him. Imitate her in these three points. Humble yourself at the feet of the Son of God; be submissive to his grace by fidelity to his inspirations; unite yourself to his sacred heart by a faithful and constant love, and you will enjoy that peace which the world cannot give, and which is a foretaste of paradise.

SAINT MARTHA, VIRGIN.

(29th July.)

"I was a stranger and you took me in."—(*Matt.* xxv. 35.)

1st Point. Consider—in the person of St. Martha, the love our Lord bears to those who devote themselves to the practice of good works. He honoured her with his visits and dwelt in her house. He spoke to her familiarly, repressed her eagerness with mildness, calmed her heart, dried up her tears, and listened favourably to her prayers, as appears from the resurrection of Lazarus. Behold what a favour it is to receive Jesus Christ and lodge him in your heart. Reflect, Christian soul, on the majesty of him whom you receive in the Holy Communion, and whom you serve in the person of your neighbour by works of charity. Think seri-

ously on what is requisite to prepare for him a suitable dwelling.

2nd Point. Consider—in the person of St. Martha, with what fervour those whom God calls to the active life ought to serve Jesus Christ in the lowest and most humbling offices. The love she bore her Divine Master made her consider no labour too great in his service; and when she perceived her sister not equally active in his regard, she complained with so ardent a zeal that our Lord found it necessary to give her this charitable reprehension: "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things. But one thing is necessary." (*Luke*, x. 41, 42.) Our saint united the exercise of the contemplative to that of the active life, and the practice of mortification to that of prayer. Her example attracted many virgins, who consecrated themselves irrevocably to God. Why should it not have the same influence over you? Virtuous soul, who have so often had the happiness of being the dwelling-place of Jesus Christ, watch over yourself with diligence, and be attentive to his inspirations. Your Spouse is immortal; leave him not, lest he abandon you, which would be the greatest misfortune that can befal you.

3rd Point. Consider—in the person of St. Martha, the happy death with which Jesus Christ rewards those who labour for him during life. Eight days before she died, she saw the soul of Magdalen, her sister, borne to heaven by angels; and the day of her own death, the Son of God visited her, inviting her to paradise, in these words: Come, my beloved, I desire to receive you into heaven for eternity, because you received me into your dwelling and into your heart during time. You nourished me during my mortal life. I will satiate you eternally in the contemplation of my Divinity. Being in her agony, she begged to be laid on ashes, in a place where she could contemplate heaven, and, taking the crucifix in her hands, she caused the history of the

Passion to be read. At these words: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," (*Luke*, xxiii. 46,) she happily expired. Oh! how liberal is Jesus Christ to those who serve him! How blessed are the labours undertaken in his service! If we serve him faithfully during life, we may humbly hope to hear those consoling words at the hour of death: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." (*Matt.* xxv. 23.)

SAINT IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA, CONFESSOR.

(31st July.)

1st Point. Consider—that since the days of the apostolic founders of Christianity—the first chosen associates of our Lord Jesus Christ—the spouse of the Lamb, the Holy Catholic Church, has not brought forth a nobler instrument of the divine glory than the saint whose name she this day honours. Educated in a court, brought up in the profession of arms, the mind of Ignatius was, in his youth, dazzled by that phantom which the deluded world calls glory; but the hand of an overruling providence having stricken on the bed of suffering this vessel of election, he discovered, in the perusal of the life of our Divine Saviour and those of his saints, the path of true honour their steps have traced; and, stimulated by omnipotent grace, he consecrated himself, with unreserved devotedness, to an object worthy of his great soul; assuming, as the device of his future exertions, the since celebrated sentence: "To the greater glory of God." You were created to glorify God, and, by your religious vocation, you are especially called to promote his greater glory; yet how unmindful are you of so exalted a destiny. In the details of duty, how many an act is lost for eternity from dissipation of

mind, or the mean and selfish motives on which it is performed!

2nd Point. Consider—that, true to his motto, our Saint lived thenceforth only for the advancement of the divine glory. Desiring to avenge on himself the injury he had offered to that glory by rendering homage to the idol of worldly ambition, he, for this purpose, sought and embraced humiliations under every form. He spared no sacrifice by which he could promote God's honour in his own sanctification; and, animated with zeal that could not brook restraint, he devoted himself also to the salvation and sanctification of his neighbour. Judging that science, with which he was but little acquainted, was necessary for attaining the great end of all his aspirations, he who shone at court, who had led heroes to battle, now seated himself amidst children in the lowest classes of the schools. In fine, burning to perpetuate his labours for promoting the kingdom of Jesus Christ, he instituted a society of apostolic men who should continue to extend that kingdom, and bear that name in triumph throughout the world. In the rules of St. Ignatius we have a perfect image of his own spirit and virtues. With what assiduity do you meditate those holy rules? What are your efforts to exemplify them in your conduct? To which of them do you turn your special attention? The leading rules especially should be studied by all the disciples of this blessed patriarch.

3rd Point. Consider—the abundant blessing with which Almighty Goodness crowned the zeal and labours of St. Ignatius. In effect, paganism defeated in its strongholds, heresy confounded throughout an entire continent, piety re-established in cities, fervour rekindled in monasteries, the evangelic seed cast in the moral wilderness, and whole nations in both hemispheres, despite the malice of demons, made captive to the yoke of Jesus Christ—such are the fruits of the

zeal of St. Ignatius, and, as it were, the rays of that glory with which the munificence of God hath crowned him. Let us give thanks to our Lord for the graces that rendered this Saint so worthy an instrument of the divine honour, and for the benediction so liberally poured forth on his works. Above all, let us give glory to *His* name who alone worketh wonders through the ministry of his saints.

Apostle of the name and glory of Jesus Christ! vouchsafe to obtain for us one spark of that sacred fire of which thy heart was a living furnace. Unworthily indeed should we bear the name of thy disciples, were we wanting in zeal for the glory of Jesus Christ and the salvation of souls redeemed with his precious blood.

AUGUST.

SAINT DOMINICK, CONFESSOR.

(4th August.)

"Behold, I have given thee to be the light of the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation, even to the farthest part of the earth."—(*Isaias*, xlix. 6.)

1st Point. Consider—that the first means St. Dominick made use of to ward off divine justice, which threatened the world with destruction, was mortification. The world was overcast by the clouds of fearful ignorance, and sunk in vice. Avarice reigned among the people, ambition among the great; voluptuousness corrupted the morals of both. What arms does St Dominick make use of to oppose this triple evil? Against avarice, contempt of earthly goods and evangelical poverty—against ambition, the opprobium of the cross, flight of honours and ecclesiastical dignities, which were several times offered him, but uniformly refused—

n fine, to luxury and voluptuousness, a life of austerity. To the most severe mortifications he added almost continual prayer, passing entire nights in this holy exercise; so that it may be said of him, as of the great apostle of the Gentiles, that he bore in his body the mortification of the Lord. Let us endeavour to imitate this great saint according to the measure of grace which is mercifully granted us from on high. Let us shew ourselves as the ministers of God in great patience, spreading abroad the odour of this virtue by the sufferings which befal us. For as sweet scented gums give forth their odour when they are burned, so is virtue shewn forth by patience.

2nd Point. Consider—that the second means which St. Dominick made use of for the reformation of morals, was preaching, sustained by the example of exalted virtue. It would seem that the Holy spirit was pronouncing his eulogium by the lips of the Prophet Malachy, so clearly does he pourtray his character in the following words: "the law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips"—here we see the purity of his doctrine: "he walked with me in peace and in equity"—behold the sanctity and innocence of his life: "and turned many away from iniquity," (*Mal.* ii. 6.)—this was the fruit of his preaching and example. The prayer of our saint was so powerful with God, that he was heard to say, no request of his had ever been refused. Having been asked from what books he drew the sublime thoughts and forcible reasoning which he made use of in his sermons, Saint Dominick replied, that he found them in the book of divine love. Make use of this, and you will soon be learned in the science of the saints.

3rd Point. Consider—that the third means St. Dominick made use of to convert sinners, and restore the exercise of religion in France, was by instituting the devotion of the Rosary of the Blessed Virgin, an

all-powerful means, for two reasons:—1st. Because, as she has been chosen amongst all creatures to give God to men, so it is to her we must address ourselves to draw souls to God. 2nd. It is by her intercession, that the Son of God distributes to men the treasures of grace which he has acquired for them; consequently, it is in vain that we pretend to succeed without her mediation. Therefore, St. Dominick, who was fully convinced of this truth, never preached, either to the people, or even before popes and kings, without making devotion to his sovereign mistress part of his discourse. It was by this means that he brought back more than a hundred thousand heretics to the bosom of the Church, and converted an innumerable number of sinners. Be devout to the holy Mother of God, and you will not fail to experience the power of her intercession; especially be faithful and constant in reciting the Rosary, if you wish to partake in the reward that our saint promises on the part of the Blessed Virgin to those who faithfully perform this duty, namely—that she will protect them at the hour of death; that they will not die without the sacraments; and that they shall not lose either their speech or presence of mind until they have received them.

SAINT CLARE, VIRGIN.

(12th August.)

"Wisdom is glorious, and never fadeth away, and is easily seen by them that love her, and is found by them that seek her."—(*Wisdom*, vi. 13.)

1st. Point. Consider—that this great saint has enlightened the world by the splendour of her sanctity. She was the chosen spouse of the Incarnate Wisdom—prevented by his grace, and inspired from her childhood with a love of poverty, purity, humility, charity,

and all supernatural virtues. She began, thenceforth, to exercise herself in prayer and meditation on the passion, and as she was penetrated with love for Jesus Christ crucified, she also conceived an ardent desire of suffering — wearing a hair-cloth on her still tender and delicate body, depriving herself of her meals to feed the poor, honouring in their person the poverty of her Spouse, who became poor in order that we might partake of his riches. While still very young she made a vow of virginity, and received the religious habit from St. Francis, who placed her in a convent of Benedictines. She afterwards withdrew with her sister into solitude, where she laid the foundation of eminent sanctity. The odour of her virtues attracted around her many, who chose her for their guide; she for a long time refused the charge, and only accepted it on the command of St. Francis. But as she had become superior through a spirit of obedience, she exercised her authority in a spirit of submission to those she governed. Her greatest pleasure was to serve them in the most lowly offices, to which she added such great austerities, that her director was obliged to moderate them. Imitate this great example, and follow this brilliant light. Love Jesus Christ crucified.

2nd Point. Consider—that this Saint has enlightened the world by her wonderful works. The prodigies that she performed during life serve as an instruction, and teach us the confidence that the chaste Spouses of Christ ought to have in his goodness. Her convent having been attacked by a troop of Moors, St. Clare, seeing herself destitute of human succour, had recourse to prayer, and caused the Most Holy Sacrament to be placed at the convent gate. Then, raising her voice, she said in presence of her enemies: Lord, deliver not up to these wicked men the souls of those who sing thy praises, and forget not thy poor servants. At the same moment she heard a voice from on high,

which replied: I will always protect them. Instantly the barbarians, who had already ascended the walls, were seized with terror, and saved themselves by flight. O how powerful is prayer, offered through the merits of the precious blood of the Lamb! A soul devoted to the Blessed Sacrament, as our Saint was, can obtain from God all she desires.

3rd Point. Consider—that this Saint, as foundress of the religious women of St. Francis, has enlightened the world by the sanctity of an immense number of virgins who have embraced her rule. Reflect on the austerity of their life, the strict poverty which they observe, the purity and innocence of their lives; their example will, no doubt, surprise you, and cause you to cry out in admiration: "O how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory; for the memory thereof is immortal: because it is known both with God and with men. When it is present, they imitate it: and they desire it when it hath withdrawn itself, and it triumpheth crowned for ever, winning the reward of undefiled conflicts." (*Wisdom*, iv. 1, 2.)

THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

(15th August.)

1st Point. Consider—those words, so applicable to the present festival: "My abode is in the full assembly of saints." (*Eccle.* xxiv. 16.) If the glory of the Blessed Virgin, as Mother of God and Queen of Heaven, is inconceivable to the human mind, her exaltation above all the saints is justly proportioned to her superior sanctity. Divine charity, the crown of virtues, burned in her soul with an ardour, incomparable as peculiar, in its commencement, its progress, and its term. For the divine Spirit taking possession of her heart, in the first moment

of her mortal existence, enkindled in it a love so intense, that according to the sentiment of the holy fathers, the act of charity she then exercised, surpassed that of the greatest saints when consummated in grace and perfection. And if, as St. Bernard says, by the consent she yielded to the mystery of the Incarnation, she merited more than all the saints have merited by all the virtues exercised through years, how must she have progressed in sanctity during the lengthened period she passed in most intimate society with the divine Incarnate Charity? To what perfection had she attained, when standing a second victim at the foot of the cross, she became the co-operatrix in man's redemption? In fine, how far beyond our weak intellect to conceive the still increasing lustre of her charity until it reached its final term, ever faithful as she was in corresponding with each new grace that heaven shed profusely on her soul, during the interval between her martyrdom on Calvary, and her glorious assumption into heaven. Whilst angels gaze with wondering admiration on this prodigy of all created excellence, let us remember that she is our mother, advocate, and model, but that only by the imitation of her virtues can we ensure the love of this mother, the protection of this advocate.

2nd Point. Consider—those words of the Canticle: "Place me as a seal upon thy heart: * * * for love is strong as death," (*Cant.* viii. 6); and reflect how intensity of divine love in the heart of the Blessed Virgin, daily consuming the terrestrial portion of her being, at length, when the pre-ordained moment arrived, sweetly disengaging the soul from its immaculate dwelling place, accomplished the office of death, which dared by no other path approach her. And if Mary's love for her divine Son, thus terminating her mortal life, would consign her sacred body to the tomb, the love of Jesus for his blessed Mother must again resuscitate that consecrated tabernacle, in which he had vouchsafed to

dwell. Thus, divine charity transported her to the blissful abode of the glorified. Let us follow her in spirit, exulting in her happiness. Our Queen, our Mother, is assumed into heaven, even to the throne on the right hand of her Divine Son! We may now confidently cry to her, from this valley of tears: "Draw us after thee, we will run in the odour of thy perfumes." (*Cant.* i. 3.)

3rd Point. Consider—what is the odour of the Spouse's perfumes? It is the example of her virtues, by which our gracious Queen and Mother has traced for us a path leading securely to eternal bliss. The first step of this mystic way is humility: "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." (*Luke*, xiv. 11.) Justly, says St. Bernard, is she in heaven crowned Queen of Saints, who on earth humbled herself as the lowly servant of all. Powerful motive to despise and annihilate self! for, the more profoundly a soul abases itself in the presence of the Divine Immensity, the more does God draw nigh unto and replenish her with his graces. The second step is purity: "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God." (*Matt.* v. 8.) Examine diligently, not by the shadowy gleam of self-love, but in the clear light of a lively faith, your inmost dispositions, that you may discover and eradicate every lurking defect, for of the heavenly Jerusalem it is said, that nothing defiled shall enter therein. The third step is patience: "If we suffer with him, we shall also be glorified with him." (*Rom.* viii. 17.) The sufferings of the Blessed Virgin exceeded the united sufferings of all the saints, as her love for Jesus Christ exceeded their united charity. Her life was a protracted martyrdom, which terminated only on this glorious day. With what affection do you embrace, with what meek endurance sustain, those little trials of patience which our Lord daily dispenses to you as portions of his sacred Cross? By fidelity in treading these steps you will infallibly attain to that

charity which is the perfection of the predestinate. The epid say they aspire not to the more exalted seats among the blessed, but do you, on the contrary, strive to follow closely your dear Mother and mediatrix; she leans on her beloved Son, if you lean on her, she will give you her hand in ascending to that degree of grace and glory to which you are called.

We salute thee on this day of thy triumph, O Queen of Heaven! vouchsafe to turn on thy servants those eyes of sweetness and mercy, which draw all hearts to thee. Thou art our hope, our refuge. O thou, whose power over the heart of Jesus is unbounded as his love for thee, obtain for us grace to imitate thee during our earthly pilgrimage, that we may behold thee hereafter in thy eternal glory!

SAINT BERNARD, ABBOT.

(20th August.)

"The Lord has conducted the just man by right ways."—(*Wisdom*, x. 10.)

1st POINT. Consider—that love of Jesus and Mary is the surest means to arrive at eminent sanctity. It was by this step that St. Bernard ascended to the highest degree of all virtues, that he was an angel by the elevation of his understanding—patriarch, by the enlightenment of his spiritual children—prophet, by the announcement of future events—apostle, by the preaching of the Gospel—doctor, in the science of the saints and understanding of the Scriptures, which appears admirably in his writings—martyr, in the mortification of his senses—confessor and virgin, by the purity of his soul and body, which he prized more than all. If you desire to attain the end which he happily reached, cultivate devotion to the Mother of God; it is the source of every blessing. Love her Son ardently, it is the

life of your soul. "Truly, my Lord Jesus," cries out St. Bernard, "he is worthy of death who refuses to live for thee, and we may say he is already dead." I will love thee, Lord, according to the measure of thy grace, and with all my strength; I am obliged to it by a duty which is but too just, and I will use all my efforts to acquit myself of it and not prove myself ungrateful.

2nd Point. Consider—that the devotion of St. Bernard was admirable by its mildness. This virtue appears in his writings, conversation, occupations, and entire conduct. He employed himself in the conversion of sinners, with so much sweetness, that he seemed to have for them a mother's heart, by which means he subdued the most rebellious spirits, and brought them under the yoke of Jesus Christ, which he tried to render sweet and light to them. This was his continual care and principal study. Learn from the example of this great Saint that mildness is a powerful means of attaining perfection, and attracting others to the love of God. It is the flower of charity which gives promise of the fruit in due season. It is the soft light of dawn, which enlightens without dazzling, and which dilates the heart with joy so sweet and tranquil, that we walk without difficulty in the paths of the highest virtue.

3rd Point. Consider—that the devotion of St. Bernard was admirable by its strength and ardour He obtained this grace from the sacred wounds of Christ crucified; whose image before which he prayed, descending visibly from the cross, embraced him, leaving the love of Jesus imprinted in ineffaceable characters in the heart of our saint, wherefore he is represented bearing the instruments of the Passion. We shall not be astonished that the devotion of St. Bernard was so lively and active, if we reflect that it originated in the sacred heart of Jesus, which is a furnace of charity. This great Saint distinguishes four different kinds of love,

which are exemplified in his life as well as in his writings: love of piety towards parents; of amiability towards friends; of justice towards enemies; and of devotion towards God. But this latter burnt so strongly in his heart, that it transformed all the others, rendering them spiritual and divine. Christian soul, who wishest to enkindle and preserve the fire of devotion, so that it never be extinguished, have always before thee Jesus Christ expiring on the cross. (St. Bonaventure.) He who knows Jesus Christ, has experienced how advantageous it is to the follower of the Redeemer to meditate frequently on his sacred Passion and the benefit of redemption.

SAINT JANE F. DE CHANTAL, WIDOW.

(21st August.)

1st Point. Consider—that God, having from eternity predestined St. Jane Frances as a vessel of election to bear his love into the hearts of many, would form in her example a bright illustration of that virtue, precious above all celestial gifts. Let us then honour the festival of our Saint, by meditating with practical fruit her characteristic perfection. Divine love, as exemplified in the conduct and sentiments of our Saint, is the vivifying principle of every other virtue. Deprived of its influence, faith is dead, hope paralyzed, all moral virtues destitute of merit, undeserving of eternal recompense; in a word, separated from this seal of sanctity, all else is nothing. One act of divine love can efface sin, reinstate the soul in grace, and revive the merit of good works. Love God, and he can refuse you nothing, not even himself; for this is the golden link that indissolubly attaches the soul to its Creator. Love God—he can demand no more; for

this cancels every debt, it is the sacrifice of homage, thanksgiving, and obedience, ever dear, ever pleasing to him who prizes above all other the victim of the heart. In fine, this heaven-descended virtue is of such infinite value, that God alone is its apportioned reward. O incomparable treasure, in which is every other good! O treasure, devoid of which, no transitory happiness can satisfy an immortal spirit, created to enjoy thee!

2nd POINT. Consider—that if divine love is the most precious of treasures, it is also the most hidden Alas! by how few is it discovered; and even in those it lies buried under terror-striking doubts and fears. The Holy Ghost sheds it secretly in the human heart, which is an impenetrable abyss; the saints conceal it under the shade of humility, and this cannot betray a secret unknown to itself. Yet, notwithstanding the painful obscurity of fears and doubts, we should always endeavour that all our actions proceed from the motive of divine love, although we must remain uncertain of its possession. This principle of sanctity, hidden in the soul, is the distinguishing mark between the predestinate and the reprobate. The value of our works can only be discernible by the root whence they spring. Thorns have their flowers, seeming fair to human gaze, but worthless in his sight who penetrates the evil soil whence they issue. On the contrary, much that to our sense appears harsh and bitter, but which the practice of virtue or preservation of regularity may require, is genuine charity. Imitate our Saint in that habitual guard of the heart, by which you will narrowly observe the spring of your actions, correct the dissipation of mind, and prevent the natural impetuosity that robs your labours of merit. Then shall divine charity be the directing principle alike of your silence, your words, in fine, of your every action; the least of which it will elevate to a participation in its own priceless worth.

3rd Point. Consider—that although divine love is a hidden treasure, and notwithstanding the care with which the saints conceal it from the world, nevertheless it cannot fail in many ways to discover itself. The interior spirit must shine forth in the practice of those virtues we admire in God's faithful servants. But not satisfied with admiring its effects, we must, like St. Jane Frances, labour to enrich ourselves with this heavenly treasure. Divine love, the most precious of all virtues, can only be obtained by purchase; and according to the Gospel, that purchase demands the renunciation of all else, not only of every evil propensity of corrupt nature, but even of whatsoever the heart cherishes from a merely human sentiment. It was by a life of continuous self-sacrifice that our saint attained to such eminent sanctity on earth, and so exalted a place in the heavenly kingdom.

O happy Saint! who from reason's earliest dawn didst burn with that sacred flame which the Incarnate Charity brought down from its heavenly sphere, and ardently desires to see enkindled in the hearts of all, vouchsafe to obtain for thy unworthy clients that pure and fervorous love of God which should consecrate our every action during life; and that we may breathe forth our souls in an act of divine charity, to continue its blissful exercise with thee throughout eternity.

SAINT AUGUSTIN, BISHOP.

(28th August.)

1st Point. Consider—how God, who is infinitely jealous of the first affections of the human heart, cast early into that of the great St. Augustin the seeds of divine grace. Love of the Incarnate Wisdom was the first ray that illumined his brilliant intellect, the first

spark that enkindled the ardours of his heart. "I longed," he says, "after immortal wisdom with incredible ardour. How was I all on fire, O my God! how was I all on fire to fly up from these earthly things to thee." The sacred name of Jesus, which he had imbibed from his mother's bosom, remained so deeply engraved on his soul, that whatever bore not its divine impress could never fully satisfy his mind. But as the fire of the sanctuary, which during the captivity of Israel became dark, like the earth under which it lay concealed, so the heavenly fire that had burned in the heart of Augustin, densed by the weight of earthly passions, seemed to be extinguished within him, and the mind whose genius shed lustre on every human science was buried in profound darkness as to all things spiritual and divine. Learn from this striking example how dangerous to indulge a voluntary and habitual subjection to those natural propensities which, from the corruption engendered by original sin, infallibly lead to vice, if not counteracted by the exercise of unremitting mortification.

2nd Point. Consider—in the conversion of St. Augustin the wonderful and efficacious influence of divine grace, of which he was to become the Doctor and defender; and which sweetly, yet powerfully, subdued his rebellious will, as himself declares:—"For thy hand, O my God! in the secret of thy Providence still held my soul. Thou didst deal with me by wonderful and secret ways, for what other cause can give salvation by thy hand repairing that which thou hast made?" The grace which triumphed over the great, though erring soul of Augustin, may truly be considered as the fruit of the prayers and tears of his sainted mother, who, to use the words of her illustrious son, offered for him, by her ever-springing tears, the daily sacrifice of a bleeding heart. This most devoted of mothers, beholding in the supernatural light of faith, the child of her

love dead to grace, wept over his unhappy condition with anguish more poignant than the carnal-hearted parent could mourn the death of her first-born. Like the widowed mother of Naim, the tears of Monica could not be dried until the Omnipotent voice of the compassionate Jesus, called back the soul of her lost one from the shades of death by these words, "*Tolle lege.*" Miraculous voice, which created in the same moment the Oracle of the Law and the Tongue of the Church! Happy moment, which dried the tears of the sorrowing mother by eliciting those of her penitent son! Let us celebrate this festival in which is displayed so gloriously the power of divine grace, by yielding a docile ear to its still whispering voice, and arising from the sleep of tepidity in which we waste the precious, fleeting hours that can never be recalled.

3rd Point. Consider—the subsequent life of sanctity which crowned the conversion of St. Augustin, and rendered him, in the words of a celebrated writer, "an angel in human flesh, an abyss of wisdom, a living image of the Divinity." The penitent love that now animated his generous and tender heart, led him immediately after his baptism into the silence of retirement; there devoted exclusively to the science of the saints, he meditated on the "Eternal Truth," and contemplated with still increasing ardour the "Ancient Beauty." Humility, the characteristic virtue, as it is the noblest ornament of great souls, had nigh robbed the Church of its treasure, resolved as our Saint seemed to bury himself in the depths of retreat; but He who had chosen the humble solitary, as the throne of his wisdom, the oracle of his doctrine, to dart forth the lightnings of his truth, and confound the enemies of Jesus Christ and his Church even to the end of ages, drew forth this sun from the cloud to enlighten and warm a dark and frozen world. Yet, amid the ceaseless cares and toils of a life, wholly devoted to promoting

the glory of God in the sanctification of innumerable souls, his tears of penitent love were never dried, and the wound of his contrite heart never ceased to bleed, until united for eternity to the adorable centre of all his affections and desires.

SEPTEMBER.

NATIVITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

(8th September.)

1st Point. Consider—"Come over to me, all you who desire me, and be filled with my fruits." (*Eccle.* xxiv. 26.) In these words does the Aurora of Mercy, the predestined Mother of your Saviour, invite you on this day of joy and hope, to contemplate the glorious prerogatives of her birth: and first those of her eternal birth in the mind of her Creator, where, from before the commencement of ages, she held a rank supereminently exalted above all creatures. Hence the Church applies to her, in a mystic sense, these words: "From the beginning, and before the world was I created." For the immaculate Virgin was predestined, as the first of pure creatures in excellence of sanctity, the most resplendent image of the perfections of her heavenly Father. She was also first of all creatures in the sublime end of her creation; infinitely exceeding in dignity that of all the elect. St. Augustin styles her the masterpiece of the Eternal council, whose creation the three divine persons concerted ere time began; a living expression of the Father's power—of the Son's wisdom—of the Holy Spirit's goodness; an object of complacence to the adorable Trinity. Of her the Spirit of God says: "Thou art all fair, O my love." Unite in the universal joy with

which heaven and earth in concert celebrate the nativity of their Queen. Give thanks for the singular favours with which she is distinguished, and resolve to eradicate every impediment to the graces you implore through her intercession.

2nd Point. Consider—the prerogatives of the temporal birth of your most blessed Mother. She enters the world at that season when the people of God celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles, which faintly typified the solemnity on which the Church honours the living tabernacle of the Most High; a tabernacle prepared as the dwelling-place of the Prince of Peace; consecrated by his divine presence; a tabernacle of whose riches and beauty the Temple of Solomon, or the tabernacle of Moses, were only a shadow. All that was most holy and illustrious amongst kings or patriarchs of the ancient testament, combined in the genealogy of the glorious Virgin Mary, which, as Rupert observes, commenced in the divinity, and terminated in the sacred humanity of Jesus Christ. But all the lustre of her ancestry was eclipsed in the transcendent glory which her birth shed upon that venerable line. The Virgin Mary is not only the glory of Jerusalem, her natal place—the honour of the house of David, the root whence sprung this Lily of the Valley; but she is the crowning work of the creation, in nature, grace, and glory. Hence, as her name imports, she is born Queen of the universe; under which title you should present her the homage of profound veneration and tender devotion; esteeming it supereminent happiness to live under her sweet empire, since, according to St. Anselm, to serve her is to reign.

3rd Point. Consider—the fruits of the spiritual birth of your Queen and Mother in the hearts of her faithful children. The fruits are the virtues characteristic of her holy infancy; namely, purity and divine love. Immaculate in her conception, she came forth

"bright as the sun, elect as the moon." Unfettered by even the shadow of inordinate affection—raised above all the unhappy consequences which original sin has entailed on the children of Adam—her heart sprung to her Creator in the dawn of existence, with more than seraphic ardour. You should emulate, as far as human frailty will permit, these virtues. To imitate her purity, you must exercise over your heart a vigilance that will discover all those evil propensities flowing from original, and increased by actual sin, and cultivate that spirit of mortification and prayer, which will gradually purify the interior from the disorder incident to our fallen nature. You may also aspire towards her exalted charity by making acts of divine love, and offering of your heart to God your frequent practice. Invoke with truly filial love this Star of Jacob—this first beam of peace and hope to the fallen—the mother of the elect. Beseech her to obtain that you may walk faithfully in the light of her example, until you are united to her in the kingdom of her divine Son.

SAINT MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL.

(29th September.)

1st Point. Consider—how the God of armies, having predestined St. Michael to be the leader of the heavenly host, endowed him with graces and privileges commensurate with his sublime dignity. Let us give thanks to "Him who reigneth for ever" for this singular favour, conferred on the glorious archangel, in constituting him prince of the heavenly intelligences, offering him our heartfelt congratulations, and ranging ourselves under his banner. Let us beseech him to obtain for us from the Omnipotent the aid we stand in need of, to combat successfully against the powers of

hell. Those wicked spirits, filled with enmity towards souls created to occupy the thrones whence they are fallen by their rebellious pride, spare neither wile nor violence to draw us also into the abyss of eternal woe. We must have recourse to St Michael, that he may discover to us the snares of our enemies, and obtain for us that inviolable fidelity to grace which will defeat all their malignant efforts.

2nd Point. Consider—that Almighty God, having created the angels to minister before the Most High, in the kingdom of his heavenly glory, required of them an acknowledgment of their essential dependence on their Creator, by an act of profound submission. When discovering to them his Eternal Word, in the mystery of the Incarnation, he said: "Let all the angels of God adore him." Lucifer, rising in his pride, refused to obey, and, by his example, draws from their allegiance a vast portion of the angelic choirs. Michael, on the contrary, by humility, attained the honour of being the first to adore the Incarnate Son of God, and leading the faithful host of heaven, cast forth Lucifer and his associates into the dungeons of unquenchable fire. Rejoice in the victory of the great archangel, detest the pride of the fallen spirits, and learn humility and submission, by descending in spirit into the region of confusion and despair to which they are condemned. To this salutary reflection the Apostle exhorts us in these words: "If God spared not the angels who sinned, but delivered them unto torments, how will he treat worms of the earth who presume to rise in opposition to his divine majesty?"

3rd Point. Consider—that it is for the glory of Jesus Christ Saint Michael fought and conquered. Lucifer, dazzled by the lustre of his own beauty, refused to adore the Eternal Word, in the abasement of his union with human nature: but Michael, in prostrate adoration, acknowledges the co-eternal Son of

God no less great under his assumed humiliation, than amid the splendour of increated light! Led on by his example, a multitude of heavenly spirits render to the Man-God, in anticipation, the homage they will afterwards present on the day of his temporal birth, and heaven resounds with canticles of joy in which they celebrate the victory of the holy archangel. But what were the weapons with which he conquered? They were first, humility, by which he recognised his entire dependence on the Creator who had drawn him forth from nothing, who was the principle of his existence, and to whom he referred his entire being with all its faculties, as to its great and only end. By one act of humility he triumphed over Lucifer, and gained for himself immortal glory. That virtue will also render us invincible in temptation, and merit for us an infinity of graces. Secondly, it was by these words: "Who is like unto God?" that St Michael encouraged the good angels and overcame the evil spirits. Words that we cannot too frequently meditate. These words will arm us against the flattering insinuations of vanity and self-love, convincing us that in comparison with God, nothing is great, nothing good; nor is there anything that could compensate for the injury we would sustain by offending him even venially.

O invincible defender of the reign of Jesus Christ! blessed archangel! all penetrated with zeal for his honour and glory, obtain for me that I may breathe only his mysteries, his maxims, and his spirit; that I may subject to him every faculty of my being—the very centre of my heart; and that having glorified him on earth by a constant homage of adoration and obedience like to yours, I may contemplate him hereafter in the splendour of a blessed immortality, and present him with you eternal canticles of praise and love.

OCTOBER.

THE GUARDIAN ANGELS.

(2nd October.)

"He hath given his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways."—(*Ps.* xc. 11.)

1st Point. Consider—that the first office of our guardian angel is to assist us during life, that is, to guard, govern, and protect us against our enemies. He guards and preserves our minds from error, our will from unruly affections, our senses from illusions, and our bodies from illness and fatal accidents: "In their hands they shall bear thee up, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." (*Ps.* xc. 12). Our angel governs and directs our intentions, that they may be pure, as well as our occupations, that they may be successful and tend to the glory of God and our salvation. He also protects us against our enemies and opposes their designs. If the devil goes about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, our guardian angel serves as a wall and defence to protect and surround us. If the demon endeavours to distract us in prayer, and make us lose the remembrance of God who penetrates the depths of our hearts, our angel on the contrary loves to inspire us with holy affections. As he continually enjoys the clear sight of God, he desires that we also should be mindful of the Divine Presence, and remember that God beholds our most secret thoughts and actions. Here admire the care of Divine Providence over you; respect your good angel, and thank him for his protection and charitable watchfulness.

2nd Point. Consider—that the second office of our guardian angel is to assist us at the hour of death, that it may be holy and precious in the sight of God

He renders it so by consoling us in the pains and fears which accompany our last struggle, either by his sensible presence, of which there are several examples in the lives of the saints, or by an invisible assistance; animating us with the hope of heaven, urging us to fidelity in the last combat, whispering the words which a holy Dominican heard in his last moments: "Servant of God, be faithful unto death, expect the Lord, combat generously, fortify your heart; great recompenses are prepared for you after a short warfare." Again, this faithful friend obtains for us on one hand the favour of God, on the other he inspires us with those sentiments of contrition and love which are necessary to die happily. "He performs," says St. Bernard, "the office of mediator between God and the soul. He is induced to undertake this charitable office through respect and love for Jesus Christ, who became man and died for our salvation." We need not be astonished if the angels serve us not only with condescension but with pleasure, having before them such an example; but what ought to create surprise is, our want of gratitude and respect.

3rd Point. Consider—that the last office of our good angel is to aid us after death, and thus to accomplish perfectly his commission of "keeping us in all our ways." Every soul which quits this world must take its place according to its works, either in heaven, purgatory, or hell. Our angel omits nothing to make us avoid the last named, and if we unfortunately precipitate ourselves into that place of torments, it is for want of obedience to his inspirations. If divine justice condemn us to purgatory, our angel conducts us himself to this prison, does all he can to shorten the duration of our punishment and mitigate its rigour. But his greatest happiness consists in accompanying the soul which he has guarded to heaven, that it may there partake of his eternal bliss. Thus, St. Anthony saw

the angels who bore the soul of St. Paul the hermit into paradise, and St. Bennet that of St. Germanus, whom these blessed spirits conducted in triumph into the heavenly Jerusalem, singing canticles of praise, joy, and thanksgiving.

Oh, what joy does a guardian angel receive from a soul that has been docile to his inspirations, and has happily persevered until it reached in safety the haven of salvation! and with what gratitude is not this faithful soul filled towards its kind protector. The young Tobias, speaking of the favours he had received from the angel Raphael, says, "What wages shall we give him, or what can be worthy of his benefits?" (*Tobias*, xii. 2.) O my soul, how canst thou adequately thank this charitable guide who labours for thy salvation with such ardent zeal. Listen to the words of the Almighty: "Take notice of him and hear his voice, and do not think him one to be contemned; for he will not forgive when thou hast sinned, and my name is in him." (*Exodus*, xxiii. 21.)

SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISSIUM.

(4th October.)

"Hath not God chosen the poor in this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which God hath promised to them that love him?"—(*James*, ii. 5.)

1st Point. Consider—the degree of perfection which St. Francis attained in the virtue of evangelical poverty. To express the contempt in which he held all earthly goods, it is not sufficient to say that he was truly poor, but that he was poverty itself. If virtues could assume a human form, poverty would have been personified in St. Francis. He was born in a stable: from the moment of his conversion he despoiled himself of all to attach himself to the cross, and died upon ashes,

covered with a poor habit which had been given him in alms. As the avaricious man is filled with envy when he sees another possessed of wealth greater than his own, so St. Francis felt a holy jealousy when he saw any one poorer than himself. The miser would wish, were it possible, to possess the riches of the entire world—though even this would not satisfy him. St. Francis possessed nothing, and his happiness increased with his poverty, because, according to St. Jerome, he is too rich who is poor with Jesus Christ. The perfect servant of Jesus possesses nothing but Jesus; for if he possess any other wealth than him, he is not yet perfect. When will you be able to say with this great Saint, "My God and my all!" O what a treasure to have nothing and to possess all things!

2nd Point. Consider—the love and tenderness St. Francis bore the poor. No one can be certain that he is loved, unless he has suffered; because, in order to know if we possess friends, worthy the name, we must be either poor or unfortunate. The friendship of the generality of men is interested; they are less attached to the person than to his possessions, and do not so much consider the merit as the advantages of those whose society they seek. It belongs to the saints alone, whose lives are formed upon the Gospel, to make themselves the friends of the poor and miserable; and their charity is, therefore, incomparably more generous than that of worldly men, their greatest attraction being towards those who are most despicable and deserted. It was this noble spirit which animated our Saint, replenishing his heart from so tender an age that he could say with Job, "From my infancy mercy grew up with me; and it came out with me from my mother's womb." (*Job*, xxxi. 18.) The tenderness and compassion which he felt at the sight of the poor, was not a merely natural feeling; it was ennobled by grace, which so increased with age that he appeared to be

transformed into charity. If the father loves his children, St. Francis was the father, the patriarch of the poor, as St. Bonaventure calls him. If the benefactor loves those whom he serves, because he looks upon them as his creatures, on the same principle St. Francis could refuse nothing to the poor. He gave them all that he possessed, even to his very self; and it might be said that he carried them in his heart, so precious were they to him. Imitate this great Saint; model your heart on his. "Acceptable is the man that sheweth mercy and lendeth: he shall order his words with judgment, because he shall not be moved for ever. . . His heart is strengthened, he shall not be moved until he look over his enemies." (*Ps.* cxi. 5, 8.)

3rd Point. Consider—the admirable wisdom with which St. Francis established his Order on evangelic poverty—thus imitating the eternal Wisdom, who created the world out of nothing, and redeemed it by the folly of the cross. For, as St. Bonaventure says, he felt certain that it was on this foundation his Order was to rest; that it would flourish so long as this virtue should be preserved; and that when this support was wanting, it would lose its power and strength. When dying, he specially recommended his spiritual children always to look upon poverty as a mother, who would render them happy whilst they lived under her meek empire. It was in the same spirit that, being questioned by his brethren as to what virtue would render them most pleasing to Jesus Christ, he replied that it was poverty, and that they ought to look upon it as the way which God had marked out for them to arrive at heaven, and as the hidden treasure of the Gospel, to attain which they ought to quit all, even the riches of the mind, which consists in human prudence, in order to enter into the power of God; and thus offer themselves, despoiled of all things, to Jesus crucified, in whom they would find all that they had aban-

doned for his love. And truly he was not deceived; since those who consecrated themselves to God under him, and who have since followed his rule, which he called the tree of life and the marrow of the Gospel, have renewed the face of the world, and filled it with the odour of their virtues. The seraphic doctor, who has written the life of our Saint, remarks, that holy poverty, which defrayed the expense of their journeys, rendered them also more prompt in obedience, stronger for labour, more suited for important missions, and for the conversion of nations.

SAINT FRANCIS BORGIA.

(10th October.)

1st Point. Consider—the fervour of St. Francis Borgia in the practice of mortification. His life was a continual death to the world and to self, to honour, pleasure, sensuality, and to his own will and judgment. Reflect on your life, and see how great the disparity. What tepidity and sensuality! When will you rise from so imperfect a state? When will you take up your cross to follow Christ crucified? You will never be pleasing in the sight of God, until you have by mortification offered both soul and body as a holocaust to him.

2nd Point. Consider—the fervour of this great Saint in the exercise of all virtues, especially charity and humility. Charity urged him to undertake the most difficult enterprises for the salvation of his neighbour, the service of the Church, and the glory of God. His humility concealed the greatness of his actions, and hid him with his Saviour in the bosom of God. Is this your practice? What account do you make of the salvation of souls? Can it be said of you as of the

faithful disciples of St. Paul, "You are dead, and your life is hidden with Christ in God." (*Col.* iii. 3.) Do you endeavour to die to self-love by the practice of interior and exterior self-abnegation? Those who do not trample on vain glory and self-esteem, will soon become a prey to their spiritual enemies, and cease to be disciples of Jesus Christ.

3rd POINT. Consider—the fervour of this great Saint in prayer and devotion to the most holy Eucharist. Compare it with your tepidity and distractions in that holy exercise. Hence conclude, that the slow progress you make in virtue is to be attributed to the little profit you draw from prayer and the frequentation of the sacraments. We should be covered with confusion when we reflect, that instead of following the precept of Jesus Christ that we ought always to pray, we allow our lives to pass by in vanity and sloth. Labour, then, seriously for your amendment, and accustom yourself, after the example of St. Francis, to live continually in the presence of God; to find him in all places, and to consider as lost the time that is not spent with God, or in the work of God.

SAINT TERESA.

(15th October

"The mercies of the Lord I will sing for ever."—(*Ps.* lxxxvii. 1.

1st POINT. Consider—and admire the mercy of God in his designs on this great Saint, whom he chose to reform the ancient and illustrious Order of Mount Carmel. Why does Infinite Wisdom make use of a woman to form the minds of men, and weakness itself to perform heroic deeds? Because he loves humble souls, who faithfully refer to him all the glory of the wonderful actions of which he makes them the instruments.

Also to show clearly that this illustrious Order, whose reformation St. Teresa effected, is a divine work, a miracle of grace, a masterpiece of Eternal Wisdom. We should also draw a lesson of encouragement from this faithful spouse of Jesus Christ, and learn not to be astonished at our weakness, but to rest on the mercy of God, who has not less good will than power to assist us. Without this confidence, the soul will be filled with trouble, misery, and sin, but when it enters, darkness is dissipated, trouble calmed, peace, joy, and fervour restored.

2nd Point. Consider—that God, who chose St. Teresa to teach men the science of the saints, and to serve as a guide to those who aspire to union with his Divine Majesty, raised her for this purpose to the highest degree of prayer, not all at once, but after many severe trials and interior desolations, which she suffered constantly for twenty-two years, to teach those who aspire to perfection, that divine love is the supreme good, and that prayer is the mystic ladder by which we reach it; but there are in it many steps, on the highest of which the Spouse awaits us, as St. Bernard says; therefore we must never grow weary, until we are united with him, because one hour's conversation with God cannot be repaid by the labours of a century. Besides the gift of prayer with which St. Teresa was favoured, God granted her that of writing with such clearness, and at the same time in so sublime a manner, that it leaves no room to doubt its being an infused gift, and that the Holy Spirit was the guide of her pen as well as of her heart. Her writings having been subjected to the censure of the most learned theologians, and read repeatedly by the best judges, there has never been found one word which was not worthy of praise and admiration. The original manuscript, which is kept in the Escurial with great veneration, is so correct, that there is not found a single erasure, which

shows that it was not the work of the human mind, but the spirit of Jesus which dictated to her whilst she wrote. Admire the goodness of God towards this great Saint, and say to him in the words of the Church: "Lord, cast your eyes on your servants and on your works. May the light of the Lord our God enlighten us and direct all our undertakings."

3rd Point. Consider—how divine mercy consummated the labours of St. Teresa and the merits of her holy life. There is no shorter way to arrive at perfection than the fervour of love. It seeks no by-paths, but goes direct to God. It requires neither time for action nor for rest; is always in motion and always in repose. This one word, charity, is an abridgment of the knowledge of all virtue, and the theology of the most learned. Therefore we need not be astonished that St. Teresa made such wonderful progress in sanctity, since she loved so fervently. It will be profitable for us to reflect by what means God conducted her; those he usually makes use of are suffering and joy. Suffering love is the most powerful, and joyful love the most agreeable. The latter confers a greater degree of happiness, the former is more meritorious. St. Teresa excelled in both. If sufferings are necessary to perfect the virtue of the saints, her perpetual fasts, long watchings; the tears she shed at one time to convert sinners, at another when supplicating for the souls in purgatory; her temptations, the frequent and heavy trials she had to endure, surpass all that can be expressed, but not all that she desired. Nothing could satisfy her; the more she suffered, the greater was her desire of suffering. She knew no medium, either to suffer or to die. If we speak of the inestimable treasures she found in the exercise of joyful love, what words can express that which Jesus Christ operated in her by so many visions and apparitions, in which he showed forth the riches of his mercy towards her—as

when he told her that the first house she established was the place of his delight; when he set a crown upon her head, and thanked her for what she had done in honour of his blessed Mother! Again, when he told her that if heaven had not been created, he would create it for her; and lastly, when he shewed her his hands filled with spiritual riches, under the figure of precious stones, and said, while complaining of the blindness of sinners, "Behold what men lose who refuse to follow me!"

O most amiable Saviour! who can refuse to admire the excess of your mercy towards this blessed spouse, in whom you have so perfectly accomplished what you had promised by the prophet Osee: "I will espouse thee to me for ever: and I will espouse thee to me in justice and judgment, and in mercy, and in commiserations." (*Osee*, ii. 19.) You have espoused her in justice and in judgment, by rendering her faithful to your grace; in mercy, by preserving her from the dangers of this mortal life; in goodness, by clothing her with the ornaments that become suitable to your spouses. O my most dear Saviour! grant that I may revere your justice, and observe an inviolable fidelity towards you during life, that I may sing your mercies eternally in heaven.

SAINT URSULA.

(21st October.)

"All the glory of the king's daughter is within."—(*Ps.* xliv. 14.)

1st Point. Consider—that it was the love of Jesus which urged St. Ursula to consecrate to him her virginity, and renounce all the pleasures of the world, to which her royalty entitled her. Her heroic example has been imitated by numberless holy virgins; there-

fore we may apply to her these words of the Royal Prophet: "After her virgins shall be brought to the king, her neighbours shall be brought to thee. They shall be brought with gladness and rejoicing: they shall be brought into the temple of the king." (*Ps.* xliv. 15, 16.) Virginity, which she loved more than life, bestows five signal advantages on those who aim at its perfection. 1st, Liberty of spirit, which is inseparable from purity of heart. 2nd, The special protection of heaven. St. Ambrose says, "The Lord protects virgins with great care." 3rd, Empire over passion and even over nature. Understand, O virgin, the honour which the Holy Spirit renders you, according to the testimony of the Scripture. He will not treat you as a slave; he will place you on his right hand as a queen. 4th, A treasure of merit, and spiritual riches of inestimable value: "Many daughters have gathered together riches: thou hast surpassed them all." (*Prov.* xxxi. 29.) Lastly, the favour of the heavenly Spouse; for there are none but virgins who follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, even to the summit of the mountains, that is to say, to the highest point of perfection: because, says St. Gregory, virginity is the most sublime degree of all virtues, since it holds converse rather with God in heaven than with men on earth. "O how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory! for the memory thereof is immortal: because it is known both with God and with men." (*Wisdom*, iv. 1.)

2nd Point. Consider—that it was the love of Jesus which animated St. Ursula to the study of wisdom and the science of the saints. Almost at the same period the Son of God gave two great lights to his Church—St. Catherine and St. Ursula—one in the north, the other in the south, like two polar stars enlightening the hemispheres; one to confound the vanity of profane learning and subject it to faith; the other to teach

the faithful the science of salvation, and conduct souls to God by the hidden paths of the Gospel and the cross; our Saint enjoying the special prerogative of being not only the mother of numberless virgins who labour usefully in the instruction of youth, but also of an infinite number of learned theologians, of the most celebrated schools, who recognise her as their patron. We may with justice apply to her the words of the Lord to Abraham: "I will bless thee, and I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is by the sea shore." (*Gen.* xxii. 17.) Live so that you may deserve to rank among her children. Hide yourself from the eyes of the world, that you may live to Jesus Christ alone.

3rd Point. Consider—that it was the love of Jesus, and the incomparable zeal she had for his glory, which induced her to leave her own country, and expose herself to the fatigues and dangers of a long journey, to seek martyrdom with the victorious troop of virgins who had placed themselves under her direction. She sought the divine Spouse, who forms a double alliance with pure and innocent souls: the first on earth, to make them partake of his sufferings and cross; the second in heaven, to crown them with that glory which the rebel angels lost by pride. Thus was Jesus a spouse of blood to St. Ursula: the arrow which pierced her heart only discovered the wound his love had already inflicted, and resembled the lance which opened the side of her amiable Saviour. But after so glorious a death he was a spouse of glory and eternal delight, bestowing upon her three brilliant crowns for those she had contemned: the crown of virgins, for her conquests over nature; the crown of martyrs, for her triumphs over tyrants; and the crown of doctors, for having overcome ignorance and error. Who would not esteem himself happy in having so powerful a protectress, whom the love of Jesus has

raised to such a height of glory? Who would not love this divine Spouse who so magnificently rewarded her? Who would not use every effort to conquer the enemies of salvation, having Jesus for King, and heaven for recompense? Animate yourself to the combat, by considering the happiness which St. Ursula enjoys, and reflect on the words of the Psalmist: "Hearken, O daughter, and see, and incline thy ear: and forget thy people and thy father's house. And the King shall greatly desire thy beauty; for he is the Lord thy God, and him they shall adore." (*Ps.* xliv. 11, 12.)

NOVEMBER.

ALL-SAINTS.

(1st November.)

1st Point. Consider—in the saints the gratuitous mercy and liberality of God, "who hath predestinated them unto the adoption of children, through Jesus Christ, unto himself, according to the purpose of his will;" "that he might show the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy which he hath prepared unto glory." (*Ephes.* i. 5, 18.) In virtue of this divine election the *Thrice Holy* called forth his saints from the abyss of nothing, and amid the darkness and corruption of a perverse world enlightened them with a singular brilliancy of faith, sanctified them by his grace, replenished them with especial gifts, conducted them in the path of salvation, and selected the most favourable moment to translate them from this state of sorrow and trial to the ineffable felicity of life eternal. Give glory to God for the wonders he hath wrought in his saints, and offer your fervent congratulations to those "spirits of the just made perfect." You also have been pre-elected

to a life of sanctity here and of eternal bliss hereafter Call to mind the many special graces imparted to you for that end, and beseech the saints to present your thanks to him who hath loved you even from eternity.

2nd Point. Consider—with what fidelity the saints corresponded with their sacred vocation; how constantly they persevered in the path marked out for them in these words of Jesus Christ: "If any man will come after me, let him take up his cross daily and follow me." (*Luke*, ix. 23.) For they excelled in self-abnegation and an irreconcilable opposition to all the propensities of corrupt nature. They daily carried the cross of their Divine Master, by patience under the severest labours, the sharpest trials, and by the invincible courage with which they combated the world, the flesh, and the devil; over these they gloriously triumphed, adhering to the standard of Jesus Christ even unto death. You desire to arrive at the same term to which the saints have attained; do you follow them in the royal way of the cross? Do you faithfully co-operate with the graces you have received? Do you daily mortify your senses and passions? Do you continually contradict your natural inclinations? What Gospel maxim is your governing principle? Do you strive so to die to the imperfections of nature, that you may say with all the saints: "I live, not I, but Christ liveth in me." (*Gal.* ii. 20.)

3rd Point. Consider—how munificently God hath fulfilled his promise: "I will glorify him who hath glorified me." In effect, he glorified his saints during life by the lustre of their virtues, frequently even in the eyes of men, always in the admiring gaze of angels. He glorified them at the hour of death, by rendering them victorious over all the powers of hell, and often casting around them a halo of anticipated bliss. He glorified them after death in the militant Church, by the honours paid to their memory, their images, and

relics; but, above all, in the Church Triumphant he has enthroned them in light eternal, where he is himself, according to Isaiah, "their crown of glory and joy." It is in your own power to be one day amongst that assembly of the blessed, whom the Prophet of the New Testament beheld "standing before the throne of God." They bore in their hands the palm of victory. The same grace through which they conquered is offered unto you, and by co-operating with it you shall obtain a share in the glory with which they are recompensed.

Remember, O Lord! that as the number of thy saints is augmented, so also is manifested the omnipotence of thy mercy. Thou hast wrought many prodigies for the sanctification of thy elect, and the power of thy right hand is not diminished. Deign then, O God of clemency! to shed on me that grace that will change me, a slothful and unprofitable servant, into a faithful imitator of thy saints.

ALL SOULS' DAY.

(2nd November.)

"It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins."—(2 *Machabees*, xii. 46.)

1st Point. Consider—that the devotion which excites us to relieve the suffering souls in purgatory is very holy, and of great help to them. This truth is founded, first, on the sacred text. The words of the second book of Machabees are so clear that they leave no room for doubt. Secondly, it is founded on the universal practice of the Church, where the commemoration of the dead, as St. Augustin says, has its place in the prayers of the priest at the altar, when he celebrates the divine mysteries. Thirdly, it is founded on

the common opinion of the Fathers St. Chrysostom says that this custom is of apostolic tradition. "It is not without reason," says this holy Father, "that the Apostles have ordered a remembrance of the dead in the holy mysteries; they knew that it was very useful, and very advantageous." St. Augustin, speaking of those for whom we ought to pray, says, there are some so holy that they do not require our prayers or sacrifices; others so wicked that all our good works cannot succour them; but there are some in a condition to be assisted, because their life has not been so innocent as not to deserve punishment after death, nor so sinful that they may not be relieved. And as we cannot make a just distinction amongst those who, by the merit of their past lives, are worthy of partaking of the suffrages offered for the dead, we must include all those who have received baptism, in order not to exclude any of those who can and ought to participate in them. But when we offer prayers for souls who do not require them, and who are already in the possession of eternal happiness, what becomes of the good works which we employ for their deliverance? They serve as sacrifices of thanksgiving for the benefits which those souls have received from God. If those for whom we pray are unhappily lost, the fruit of those prayers remains with him who prays, or is applied to those to whom the justice of God wishes to apply it. What profit do the souls in purgatory derive from good works offered for them? St. Ambrose and St. Jerome tell us they procure for them the deliverance or the diminution of their pains: they are sacrifices of propitiation which appease the anger of God. St. Gregory, in his dialogues, relates the example of two persons who were delivered by the offering of the Holy Sacrifice, from the pains which they suffered after their death. And it is related by St. Augustin, that St. Perpetua delivered her brother, who died at the age of seven, from the pains which he

endured, by her prayers and good works. If a child of so tender an age is condemned to the flames of purgatory, what will become of us who, during so many years, have heaped up so much straw and wood to serve as food for these devouring flames?

2nd Point. Consider—that this devotion is very holy and very salutary to the living. First, because it draws down on us the mercy of God, by that which we exercise towards the suffering souls. Secondly, because it teaches us to fear divine justice, which punishes venial sin with such severity, and of which we have not sufficient dread. Thirdly; in assisting these poor souls we apply ourselves with more care to avoid the pains of purgatory, the least of which, according to the testimony of the holy Fathers, much exceeds all that can be suffered in this life. Let us pray, in the words of St. Augustin: "Lord, chastise me not in your anger; grant that I be not amongst those who will hear the awful sentence: Go into eternal fire. Purify me in this world, so that satisfying your justice here, I may escape hereafter the pains of purgatory."

3rd Point. Consider—that this devotion is very holy and necessary to all the faithful, but especially to evangelic labourers. All the faithful are bound to assist the souls in purgatory, on account of the close union we form as members of the one Head, who desires that we assist each other. But those who labour in the vineyard of the Lord have still a stricter obligation, on account of their employment, which is to procure the salvation of their neighbour, and the greater glory of God. For, as Father Lainez, in recommending this charitable office to the departed souls, remarks, we should have much reason to reproach ourselves with want of charity, if, while professing to lead souls to heaven, we abandoned them in this so pitiable a state, near the end of their journey, when they suffer extreme pains without being able to relieve themselves. St.

Bennet and St. Lewis Bertrand, both celebrated preachers of the order of St. Dominick, disputed as to whether it were a greater charity to assist the souls in purgatory or to labour for the conversion of sinners. St. Lewis contended for the last-named opinion, but abandoned it by the impression which was made on him by one of the suffering souls appearing to him, and making him feel, in a slight degree, the pains which were endured in these expiatory fires; and from that time the saint exerted his utmost zeal to succour the suffering souls.

SAINT STANISLAUS.

(13th November.)

"Being made perfect in a short space, he fulfilled a long time."—(*Wisdom*, iv. 13.)

1st Point. Consider—the means by which Stanislaus acquired his eminent holiness, and first, his disengagement from the world. One of his most frequent sayings was: "I am not made for this world, but for eternity." Deep reflections on his last end filled him with contempt for whatever passes, and he loved to soar in spirit to the realms of bliss for which he was created. He seized every occasion of enkindling in his own heart and in that of others, the love of the munificent Being who had drawn him into existence, and he made every sacrifice to secure the perfect enjoyment of him. For this he abandoned family, friends, wealth, comforts, honours—all that could deter him from cleaving to his Sovereign Good. Do you, religious soul, surmount with equal generosity every obstacle which impedes your progress to heaven? Do you daily consecrate and give to your Creator, the heart which he made warm and tender that its affections might be directed to him and become a spur in his service? He urges you

resent it to him. "My child, give me thy heart." (*Prov.* xxiii. 26.) If your conscience upbraid you with having refused it, blush at your tepidity, and grieve to have allowed the fairest portion of your life to elapse in indifference towards him who alone is worthy of its devotedness.

2nd Point. Consider—follow the holy youth to his religious retirement, and contemplate the manner in which he sanctified his novitiate life. Penetrated with gratitude to God for his call, his heart glowed with affectionate tenderness towards his Benefactor, and he ever endeavoured to multiply the effusions of his fervent thanks. Nothing seemed small or lowering which was done in the service of his great Master; and he performed with as much zeal and inward joy the menial occupations of the novitiate, as if he had been engaged in the highest studies of theology. By this fidelity in little things he advanced so rapidly in the science of saints, as to arrive in ten months at consummate holiness, and deserve the application of those words of the wise man: "Being made perfect in a short space, he fulfilled a long time, for his soul pleased God: therefore he hastened to bring him out of the midst of iniquities." Do you endeavour to emulate the sanctity of your patron, by implanting in your heart a desire of humiliation and abjection, love of prayer and self-denial, a spirit of recollection and union with God, exactness in ordinary duties, and punctual discharge of every order of obedience? You are equally called to a life of perfection, and bound by the same rules which sanctified him. Beg him fervently to take you under his guidance and direction in the study of them. The surest way to secure his patronage is to imitate his virtues. Be faithful to what is within your reach, and God will hereafter bestow on you greater helps to undertake what is above it.

3rd Point. Consider—the advantage St. Stanislaus

derived from his devotion to the Blessed Virgin. If God is the source of all graces, Mary is the channel through which they flow. He styled her his mother—she loved him as a son; he offered her his heart, with its dearest affections—she, in return, placed her Divine Infant in his arms; he recurred to her in all difficulties—she was ever ready to restore peace to his soul. When debating on the choice of a state of life, she appeared to him, and invited him to the society of her Son. She attended at his last moments, and, in company with angels, carried back his spotless soul to the bosom of God. Devotion to the Blessed Virgin is a mark of predestination. We are sure of obtaining the favour of God when we have so powerful an advocate to intercede for us. Above all, we must imitate her favourite virtues of humility and purity.

PRESENTATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

(21st November.)

1st PRELUDE.—Imagine you see the holy Infant ascending the steps of the temple; accompany her in spirit, and contemplate her fervour, devotion, and recollection.

2nd PRELUDE.—Beg a share of her perfect dispositions.

1st POINT. Consider—the eagerness and promptitude with which the Blessed Virgin consecrated herself to God in his holy temple. She allowed neither tenderness of age, weakness of body, nor affection of parents to withhold her, when, at the age of three years, she was inspired to give herself to God. All that retarded her sacrifice afflicted her soul. She would willingly have made it on the day of her birth, had not her piety, her love of God, her reason, which prevented

her years, pointed out to her that she was to follow the order of nature, and be subservient to its laws. Every day, every hour, appeared ages to her in the desire she had to see herself solemnly dedicated to the service of her Creator. Do you, religious soul, experience a similar degree of ardour and promptitude in giving yourself perfectly to God? You should have begun to love him from the first time you were taught to know him, for the offering of your entire being was a tribute justly due to your Creator. But if you failed in the performance of this early act of homage, did you, in succeeding years, endeavour to repair the omission? Will those years be reckoned in the book of life as full and perfect? Mary, inflamed with the love of God, at a tender age devoted herself to his service, and she never relented in this undivided oblation. Such is the bright example she gives you; and how have you profited by it? I have loved thee late, O Lord! Alas! how many years have I passed without loving thee at all. How many more in which I only repaid thy ardent love for me with tepidity and ingratitude.

2nd Point. Consider—that the Blessed Virgin not only consecrates, but gives all she has and is, without the least reserve. She breaks the tender ties which attach her to her parents: God is in future to hold their place in her regard. She renounces all worldly goods: the Lord alone is to be her portion for ever. She surrenders her liberty, to have no other will than that of God. She rejects all pleasures for the love of him who is henceforth to be her only delight. Like the Blessed Virgin, religious persons have broken the ties of flesh and blood; but do they never renew these tender attachments, or form new ones, in after-life? They have abandoned all worldly goods; but was there no reserve in the sacrifice? They have renounced their liberty; but do they never seek to resume it? They have abjured all earthly pleasures and sensual gratifi-

cations—they have taken up the cross, and obliged themselves to lead a crucified life; but does the spirit of mortification, interior and exterior, form the prevailing feature in their lives? Does self-love never reclaim its ancient rights? What will it avail these tepid and imperfect religious souls to have made a solemn and public consecration of themselves to God, if their after-lives belie their holy profession, and if he who detests rapine in a holocaust finds little else in the sacrifice they have offered him! Abhor such prevarication, and resolve never again to be guilty of it.

3rd Point. Consider the fidelity with which the Blessed Virgin fulfilled every obligation she had contracted with God. She was not one day fervent in discharging her duties of devotion and charity, the next tepid and negligent; no, Mary was always faithful, always an exact observer of the law of God, always submissive to the least sign of his adorable will, always inflamed with the fire of his holy love. Days and years rolled on, but the fervent sentiments of Mary's heart were ever the same. Have you, religious soul, nowise relented in your fervent efforts to live up to your sacred engagements? If conscience reproaches you with having hitherto led a life little conformable to the spirit of your holy state, deplore your infidelity to your heavenly Spouse, and resolve, now at least, to lead one less unworthy of him. Approach him with humble love and confidence, for he is a merciful and loving Spouse; and though you have been unfaithful to him, he is still ready to receive you with open arms, provided you are sincerely sorry for the past, and resolved to amend for the future. Let your life, then, henceforward be holy, fervent, and mortified—conformable to the life of Jesus—according to his heart. Offer yourself this day to God by a fervent renewal of your vows, under the auspices of the Blessed Virgin, who is your tender mother and should be your model; beg

her to present your offering to her Divine Son, and to obtain for you all the graces you stand in need of to enable you to be faithful unto the end, but endeavour to merit her intercession by constant efforts to imitate her virtues; this will be the most acceptable proof you can give of sincere devotion to her, and the best means of securing her powerful aid in your behalf.

SAINT ANDREW, APOSTLE.

(30th November.)

1st Point. Consider—the many graces that were combined in the vocation of Saint Andrew, for our divine Saviour not only called him to the apostleship, but by a singular favour, he was the first chosen of the sacred college—the guide who conducted Saint Peter to Jesus Christ, and by his example, engaged him to become the disciple of the Redeemer—and finally, on him was conferred the enviable privilege of expiring like his divine Lord on the wood of the cross. How exalted, how glorious such a vocation! not indeed in the eyes of the world, which, having despised the Master, must hold in aversion his professed followers. But, in the sight of God, and of those who view all things in the light of his knowledge and love, what a glorious prerogative to be the first called, and consequently the model of all those elected to the apostolic ministry, to be the fellow-labourer of Jesus Christ in the conversion of the world, and to follow that world's Redeemer even to the death of the cross! Congratulate our blessed Apostle on those marks of the predilection of his Divine Master. To you, also, has been vouchsafed a special grace of predilection, in the vocation that leads you not only to follow Jesus Christ even to the cross, by the perfect sanctification of your own soul, but also requires that, with the Apostle, you

desire to spend yourself and be spent in working out the designs of redeeming charity.

2nd Point. Consider—it was by persevering fidelity that Saint Andrew proved his gratitude for the distinguishing love of our divine Saviour. He obeyed the summons to leave all things without excuse or hesitation; he exercised the functions of the apostolic ministry with indefatigable zeal; when the pre-ordained moment for participating in the cross of his Lord arrived, he embraced it with tenderest affection, the fire that burned in his heart glowing forth in those inflamed words: O good cross! ardently have I loved thee, long have I desired thee; receive me into thy arms! Have you ever penetrated the depth of these words? do you reflect that the cross is at once the sign and the medium of salvation? remember to what you are engaged as a disciple of a crucified Master. Being honoured with that title, you must not only bear the cross on your forehead, as a character of glory, but engrave it so deeply in your heart, that your entire conduct may bear the impress of its spirit.

3rd Point. Consider—we serve a good master, whose liberality increases in proportion to the devotedness of his servants. The ardent zeal of Saint Andrew was recompensed, not only by the abundant benediction with which his labours were crowned, but by the tender affection of his divine Lord, to which the Gospel renders so glorious a testimony: "The Lord loved Andrew." And if, whilst yet in the infirmity of a mortal state, Jesus Christ conferred on this favoured Apostle such peculiar marks of love, in what an ocean of bliss will that love embosom him for eternity! When the Crucified shall come in the day of his triumph, as Sovereign Judge of the living and the dead; when the cross shall appear in the heavens as the ensign of his glory and the rallying point of his elect,

how shall they rejoice who, during the present life, have borne and cherished that divine badge of salvation! Strive so to crush the repugnance of nature, that you may receive, at least with filial submission, if not with grateful affection, the cross it may please your heavenly father to assign you, and rely confidently, that he who bore so grievous a one for your sake, will impart to yours an unction that shall redeem its bitterness.

My sweet Saviour! I desire to embrace, with loving devotedness, the sufferings thou art pleased to allot me; but thou who knowest my weakness, vouchsafe to impart that persevering patience which will crown in me the work of thy mercy. Amen.

THE END.

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